

**Chisom Nwankwo**

**Nigeria**

**July 29, 2022**

**What initially got you interested in working in the environmental welfare and/or the sustainability sector?**

“My Interest in sustainability started through my passion for millinery and fashion accessory design. Millinery was something I did as a "side hustle," creating hats and fascinators from textile waste offcuts. But it has grown from being a "side hustle" to an impactful life changing project that has provided availability for vocational skills training, business start-ups for low-income women, and, most importantly, a channel for awareness creation on sustainability and environmental protection.”

**Please describe the work you are doing around environmental welfare and sustainability.**

“I work with refugees and internally displaced persons through my nonprofit called ‘The Skilled Women Initiative (TSWINI)’ founded in 2017 in Abuja, Nigeria. I teach skills such as textile, plastic, and tire waste upcycling as a sustainable climate change adaptation skill. We have trained over 1,000 refugees to create jobs and new means of income through plastic and textile waste collection. In the last five years, we have upcycled over 10 tons of textile waste into rugs, bags, and furniture.”

**Who is the target audience to get involved with your projects?/How do you engage your community in learning about these projects?**

“Refugees, displaced people, and women living in rural communities are the main beneficiaries of our physical training on sustainable livelihoods. Our greatest means of engagement is community outreaches, town hall meetings, and most recently social media (handles added below interview).”

**What is your favorite environmental education activity for your community?**

“As a milliner who uses a lot of textile offcuts, my favorite environmental education would be textile waste upcycling, because textile waste is the second largest polluter after oil and gas and it isn't a topic that is widely discussed. Creating new awareness and products using social media and direct word-of-mouth marketing have always been excellent ways for my team and I to get the word out on our projects and products. We also have our special Kwando Market which is an access-to-market event specially curated for low-income persons to get their products and services available to new customers and locations.”

**Do you envision any ways in which your projects can be applied in the context of the United States?**

“Definitely. In any community, even in the United States, there will always be low-income persons who can benefit from learning sustainability skills.”

**Are there any ways for people from the United States to get involved with your project?/What would you like our readers to know about your project?**

“The projects carried out by my organization involve teaching a lot in the rural communities in Nigeria. Since 2017, our projects have impacted the lives of over 1,000 beneficiaries, especially refugees, displaced persons, and victims of gender-based violence. The United States people can get involved by donating training equipment, mentoring a trainee, offering to train skills online via social media and other cloud based meeting platforms, or simply supporting our work via social media.”

**Social media handles:**

Instagram @ theskilledwomen

Twitter @ Tskilledwomen

Linkedin @ TSWINI The Skilled women Initiative

Website: [www.tswini.org](http://www.tswini.org)