

**Interview with:** Adedayo (18)  
**Interviewed by:** Temitope  
**Date of interview:** 19 February 2017  
**Travel:** Nigeria – South Africa

**Temitope:** Good evening, ma'am. My name is Temitope and today I will be conducting a session with you where you will be talking about your life experience. It's going to be through an oral history methodology. Anything you tell us will be treated with confidentiality. You might wish to tell us your name or, if you don't feel comfortable, you can just remain anonymous for the project. Thank you very much.

**Adedayo:** My name is Adedayo.

**Temitope:** As I explained, we are trying to gather oral histories or life histories of immigrants from different countries. Can you please tell us your story, from an immigrant perspective?

**Adedayo:** In South Africa?

**Temitope:** Yeah. You can start with some of your experiences even before you got to South Africa and your experiences since you have been in South Africa.

**Adedayo:** Alright. I went to the University of Lagos—let me start from there—for my B.A. A few years later I went back to do my Master's. Because I couldn't get a job, I thought that having a Master's would make it a little easier considering it is a qualification.

After that, we just kept up with our life in Nigeria. Then my husband decided to go to South Africa to pursue his PhD. We agreed that he would go first, prepare the way, and we would join him later. So he came and after a year, my two children and I joined him. So that is how we found ourselves in South Africa. My husband came in January 2015. We joined him in January 2016.

Since the children have been here, they have been going to school. In the same year—2016—I conceived and gave birth to another baby. So there are three kids now. I am thinking of putting the little one into a crèche once she has grown a little, and then I will pursue my career too. That is what I am thinking. We are deciding about this right now.

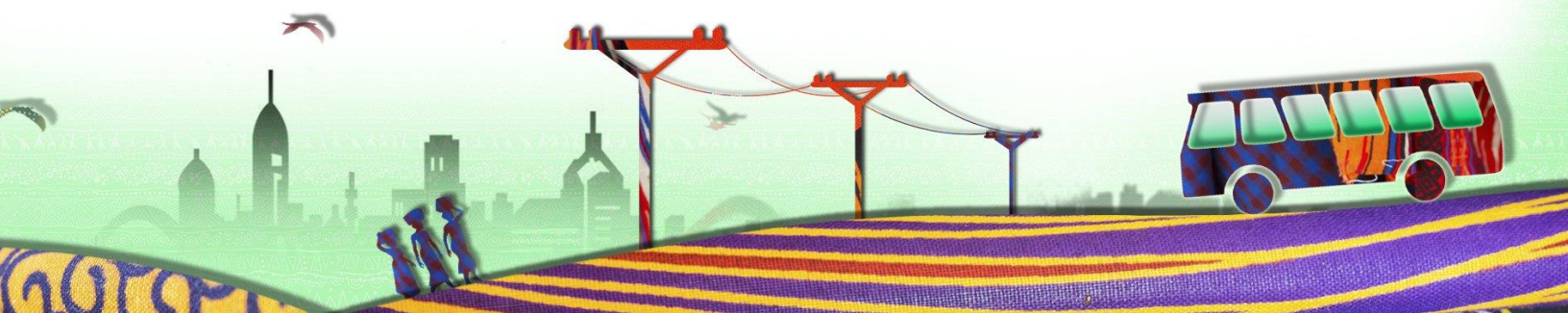
**Temitope:** So what are your experiences in Durban? How do you see Durban? What have you been through since you got to Durban, your everyday activities and all that?

**Adedayo:** Well, Durban is a nice place. Durban is a good place to be [taking into account] the weather. It is not too cold and not too warm. So it is a nice place to be. That's the first thing.

The people of Durban, the local inhabitants, or the original inhabitants so to speak ... let me put it this way: they are not too friendly, not all of them. Some are. When I first came I experienced this challenge: the people were not too friendly. When you enter a taxi, you know, the local people call you 'kwerekwere', knowing that you are a foreigner.

**Temitope:** Is that a Zulu word? What does it mean?

**Adedayo:** In Zulu language 'kwerekwere' means a foreigner. It is somebody who does not understand their language, but they want you to understand their language. They want you to speak it, and when they speak it to you they want you to respond. So if they speak it and you don't respond they know you are a foreigner who does not understand their language. So they tend to treat you ... I don't know how to put it ... they treat you badly. They won't assault you, but, you know, the way they speak, the way they interact with someone who understand their language is quite different from the way they interact with someone who does speak their language. This was a challenge for me in the beginning. It



is still a challenge, but I am calm about it now. I don't even [acknowledge] it. I just ignore them. The little ones can use Zulu greetings. My little son teaches me because he does isiZulu at school. I really want to speak Zulu.

But the challenges I faced at first are lesser now. Then I didn't understand their way of life. When I got on a taxi it was difficult. When you take the front seat you have to collect the transport fares from all the other passengers and hand them over to the driver. That was a little bit difficult for me because when they say one-ten, two-thirteen, three- fourteen, I didn't even understand what they meant. But now I understand it very well. So, that one is no longer a challenge for me. I know where I am going. I know how to call a taxi. I know how to comport myself. I am getting use to their system.

You know, I came here on a [spousal permit] but I am feeling relaxed knowing full well that my status will be changed. It says on my visa that I am a visitor, though I accompanied my spouse. They shouldn't have put 'visiting' but that is their own cup of tea. But I am feeling a little bit more relaxed knowing that God is on our side and things will be sorted out. My status will be changed because I am considering going for my PhD.

But wherever you go, it is difficult. Even when you go to the market to buy groceries, the women in the market don't even speak English at all. They don't. It's not that they don't understand. Most of them do understand.

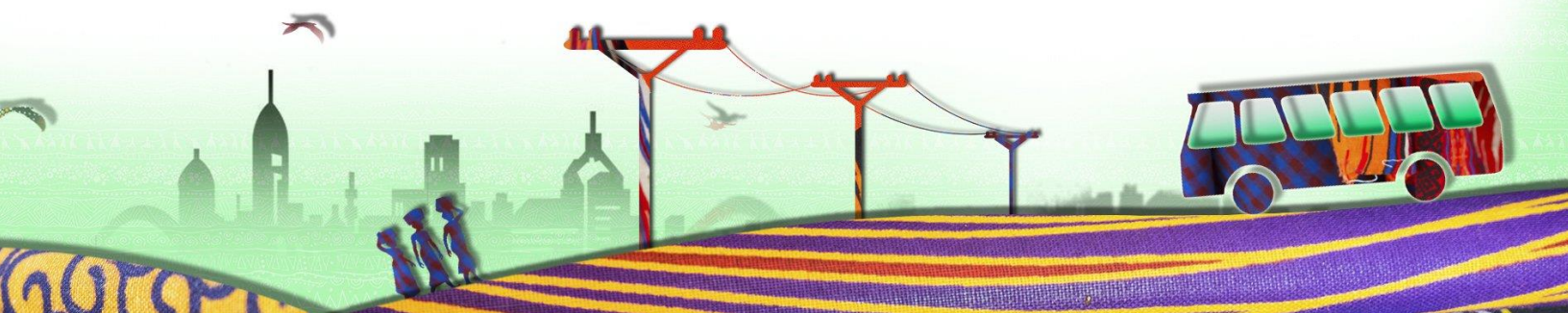
I first came to South Africa in September 2015 for the World Social Science Forum at the International Conference Centre (ICC). I realised that even at the airport they speak Zulu. All the staff speak Zulu to each other. They even speak Zulu to you. So when I realised this, at first I loved it. The concept was okay. This was their country and they were really encouraging their language.

So when I went back to Nigeria I told people that I really love these people. They really encourage their language and their people since it is their country. You know, if you as a foreigner want to live in their country you have to learn their language.

But when I came back to South Africa I realised that they would speak Zulu everywhere you go, in every nook and cranny. They speak to you first in Zulu. If they want to greet you or talk to you, they first talk in Zulu and they expect you to respond in Zulu. If you don't, they will keep on speaking the Zulu until you tell them you don't understand Zulu and they then speak English. It's not that they don't really know how to speak English. They might not be fluent but they still have a little bit of English in them. So that was the challenge at first. Now I either ignore them or I let them know that I don't understand Zulu. But I try to use Zulu with the little things like asking how much something is at the market. I try to say it in Zulu so that they understand. But when they speak more in Zulu I have to tell them I don't understand. But even when they speak, my instincts tell me what they are saying. I either nod, or let them know that I don't understand what they are saying. So that's when I found out that even whites experience what we blacks are experiencing. Even white South Africans speak English. They don't all understand Zulu and they are not intimidated. They speak English the way we know it.

So those are the challenges.

Then, my visa says that I am 'visiting', although it shouldn't be so. When I came I wanted to open a bank account but it was declined because of my visa status. So I told the lady at the Nedbank at the University of KwaZulu-Natal that although my visa said 'visiting', I was going to stay for as long as two years or more. But I couldn't really challenge her or argue about it because she was not the one who gave the visa to me. It was issued in Nigeria by their Consulate General. So I couldn't open a bank account. I think that is a big challenge for all immigrants and those who do not have permanent residency. Although those who are here on study permits are allowed to open an account, those



visiting for two weeks, three weeks, one month can't open an account. Those who are staying beyond a year or two should be allowed to do so. So it's another one of the challenges too.

I said earlier that the Zulus are not friendly. When you are living with them, they see that you are a foreigner. They only live in peace with their neighbours who are Zulu or those who can speak Zulu fluently, when they can talk back to them. They see you as someone who has come to their country to exploit them. Maybe this is due to their experience in the apartheid period. I think that the apartheid period experience really shaped the course of the history of Zululand or South Africa, so to speak. Though the South Africans they have around them now might not be the same ones as then, I think that culture and custom has been passed down to them. Even in the little ones, the kids of two or three years old, you see that culture in them. They too see you as a foreigner. One day somebody, an Indian man or woman, told our pastor that he was a foreigner and that they were South Africans. My pastor asked him: "Are you not from India? Then both you and me, we are foreigners." So I think we should do away with that mentality because in Nigeria, where we are from, South Africans are all multi-nationals. We do not differentiate. We do not discriminate; unlike what they are doing here.

So those are the challenges we are facing as foreigners or as immigrants in South Africa and there are many more.

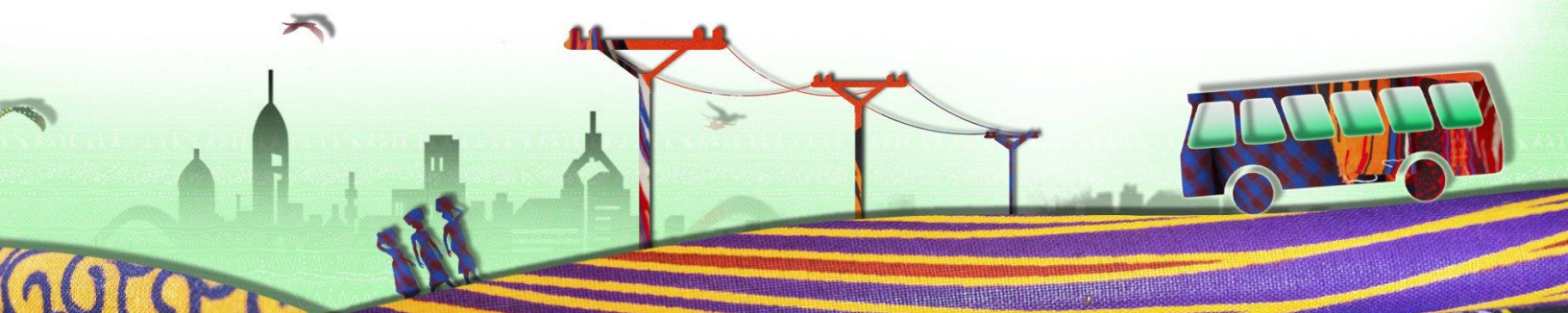
**Temitope:** Yeah. You mentioned some key points about discrimination and all that. How did you feel when you experienced something like that personally, when somebody called you a 'kwerekwere'? What was your impression? How did you feel then?

**Adedayo:** Well, I didn't feel bad and I am still not feeling bad because in every culture, or in every tribe, when you see someone who does not understand your language you give them name in your own dialect. Even in Nigeria, among ourselves, we call the Igbos 'Omo Nna' ... what do we call them? 'Omo Igbo.' They too have a name for the Yorubas, and also the Hausas. So in Nigeria when we have a foreigner in our midst we call them 'Ajoji' or 'Kogbede'. 'Kogbede' means that the person does not understand our language/dialect. So I am not intimidated by that because I know that if I really want to understand their language, I will, even if I don't want to. So I am not intimidated in any way. I didn't feel bad in any way and I don't feel bad still.

I didn't find it difficult when I came. When I came I met some Nigerians, like my pastor and the family. They stay around us. So sometimes when I feel bored, I go to them. I go to their house and I stay. The housing they live in has a mix of Indians, coloureds, whites and Zulus, so I am used to their ways of life. I am even used to their food and the way they eat. I eat what I think is okay for me to eat. The rest I leave. So I have become used to everything they do. But there are some bad cultures, some cultures I, as a Christian, don't imbibe and never will. But I don't have a problem with meeting people. There is a Zulu lady very close to us that we became friends with. My husband just met her on her way. One day she came to greet us and we welcomed her. We became friends. She was here with her family—her children and her husband. Whenever she has any problem, she comes to my husband. Whenever she wants to go anywhere she calls my husband because she doesn't have a car and he takes them out. I don't have problems with them since I can speak English. Most of them understand English and understand it. When you tell them you don't understand Zulu, they speak English, so I don't have problem with that.

**Temitope:** Being a foreign national, do you find the environment secure for you to move around in? Do you feel secure when you go to town and all that?

**Adedayo:** Yes, I feel secure. We got this apartment when we came and we have stayed here ever since. When I came in September 2015, my husband was living at the Point on South Beach. When we came



for that conference, I realised over the five or six days that there were dangers. During that conference, many of the participants were robbed by what they call 'skabengas' (thieves). So there are risks.

**Temitope:** Okay. These 'skabengas' are like 'tsotsis'?

**Adedayo:** There are so many tsotsis in the Point Road and ICC area. So many of the participants were robbed. Even at the conference we were warned to be careful. I was so scared then. I said: Oh, my God, is this the place we are coming to? I thought there was no security. Even now, I think the security here is not that good. It is not as tight as it is in other countries. I think the government should do something about the situation in which citizens are harmful and scare people. So when we got here, we were told to be careful. They even said we should not allow the children to move around anywhere. I used to be scared when my son went off to school but I have put everything into God's hands and said: Take control.

Some neighbours told us that the man who was living in our place before we came in left because people tracked him home and robbed him. I was greatly scared that day. But if anything happens to me or to us as a family, I know that God's hand is there. So I said to myself that nothing will happen to us. The same person said we should not be scared about coming in any time. We should make sure we lock the main gate first before we open the one that leads to our sitting room. And they also told us that whenever we are moving around, we should be careful. We should watch front and back, left and right to see if there anyone coming behind us and things like that. It's been a year-plus now and nothing like this has happened to us. We are secured by God's grace. So now I don't have any doubt or any fears about that.

**Temitope:** You mentioned something about your visa, that something was written on it, like you were 'visiting' or something. Was it a mistake or was that how it is done?

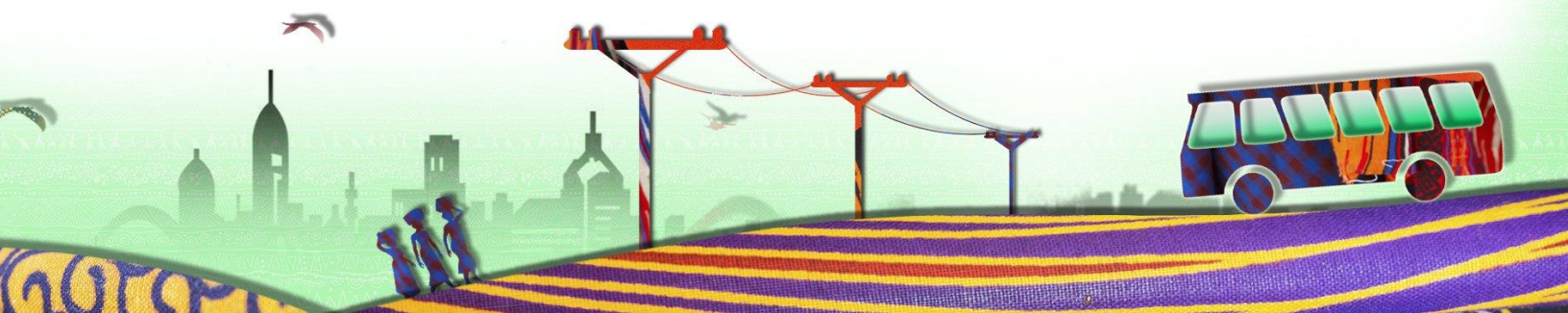
**Adedayo:** That I don't know. I don't think it was a mistake because when we presented our papers to the embassy, my husband was given a permit allowing him to be a student. His papers said he could come with his family. So I don't know. I don't know why it was 'visiting' because we have spent more than a year here—in fact, two years. Why was it 'visiting'? I don't know.

**Temitope:** So you were not able to open a bank account and the visa doesn't allow you to work or study?

**Adedayo:** No, it doesn't allow me to work. The visa doesn't allow me to work or study.

**Temitope:** So you have been in Durban in 2016 and 2017. How do you feel that you have been sitting at home most of the time? You have not been working and all that. Can you share some of your experiences of being at home?

**Adedayo:** Ordinarily, I don't like sitting at home without doing anything. When I finished my first degree, I couldn't get a job but I had a shop where I was selling things. After I got my Master's it was the same thing—that is, even before I came to South Africa. So I got here and the visa says 'no work, no study'. But then I immediately conceived, so I couldn't do anything. I was at home twenty-four/seven. When the children go to school I am at home all alone till they come back, and again the next day. I am not feeling too good about it. I love to work. I would love to make more money. But when that is not happening what we can do? Even if I have to work now, although the visa says 'no work, no study', I have to first have all my certificates evaluated by the South African Qualification Authority (SAQA). The certificates will be evaluated before one can work or study because they don't allow foreign certificates here. So I have to do that first and to do that I have would have to gather money. To [submit] my first and second degree certificates, I have to gather about R2000 before I can think of working and studying. So that is it. But sitting at home twenty-four/seven is not a good thing to me. Sometimes I feel bored, but what can I do?



**Temitope:** At times when you feel bored, what do you do?

**Adedayo:** Sometimes I sleep. This is why I like going to church. I go to the mid-week services. I make sure I go to church instead of sitting from morning till night doing nothing. At times I don't even open the door and go outside. I stay indoors throughout.

**Temitope:** Given the challenges with working and studying, what are you doing to make things better? It's clear that you cannot take a job right now with your visa. You may not even be able to do business. What are you doing to make sure things get better?

**Adedayo:** That is what I meant when I said that if I have to work or further my studies, I have to do the SAQA registration first. With that SAQA certificate, I can apply for a job. I can even further my studies with the certificate.

**Temitope:** You talked about your children going to school. Is it expensive for foreign nationals to get their children into schools in this place? Or is it easy to do that?

**Adedayo:** Hmmm ... One good thing about South Africa is that it's not too expensive to put your child into a government school. But where we are in Seaview, the only government school around us is Seaview Primary School. It is not free. Parents must pay. When my son went there the school fees were R770 per month. But the good thing about it is that you can apply for exemption or part payment.

**Temitope:** Okay, what do you mean by exemption?

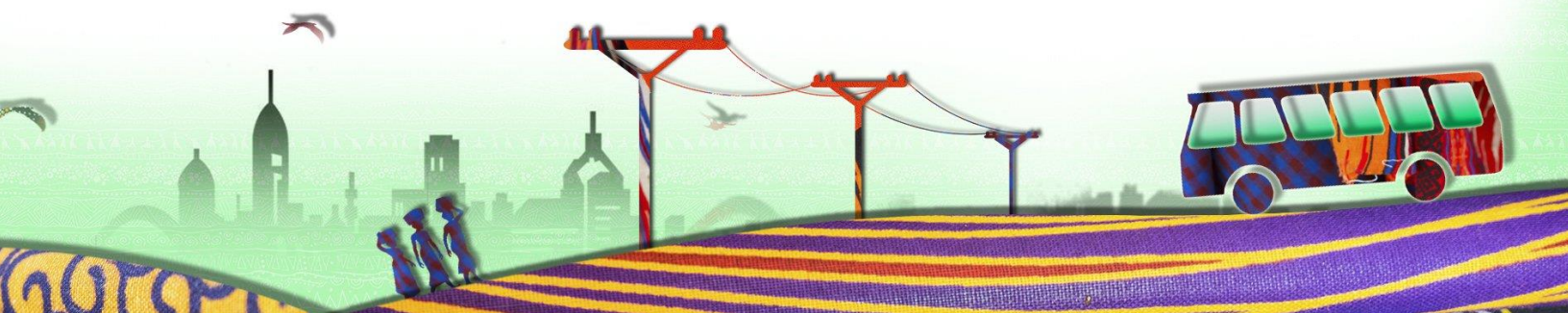
**Adedayo:** Exemptions mean you will be exempted from paying, but I don't think that happens. Instead of you not paying at all, you have to pay something that you know you can afford. You have to be committed to a certain amount, a fixed amount that you know you can afford as a parent. So you will get a form to fill in and have to attach some documents. But now the fees have increased to R880 a month. Somebody just informed us. My husband's friend came around and discussed the child's fees with him. He said that being a South African, if you want you can stop paying, this is what you can do. So my husband went to the school and complained. They gave him that form to fill in and we were asked to pay half the fees every year. I don't know how much you pay at private schools but I know that in government schools you can be given exemption or part-payment.

**Temitope:** When you compare your experience here in Durban to your experience in Nigeria, what are the differences and similarities?

**Adedayo:** Of course, there are differences. We are all from the same Africa but there are differences. Their cultures and customs are very different from ours. In Nigeria we don't discriminate against foreigners. We welcome them. We even welcome them more than we welcome our own people. We treat them well but here it is not so. Here they see you as coming to take their jobs and take their wives, to marry their women and to take their wealth. They see you coming as someone who is coming to exploit them but we don't do that in Nigeria. So, the atmosphere in Nigeria is more relaxed that it is in South Africa. In Nigeria we are hospitable but here it is not the case. I can't really say why this is. Their way of life and their thinking is due to their orientation.

**Temitope:** And since you came to Durban, have you witnessed any form of xenophobic attack, directed at you personally or at somebody you know?

**Adedayo:** We didn't experience that. My husband did when he came in 2015. In March and April xenophobic attacks happened in Durban. My husband experienced them. He was a student leader for Nigerian students. During that period he met with the [Nigerian] ambassador to South Africa. He went to different people that he knew would help to protect Nigerians in Durban at that time. He was sending the pictures to me. I was afraid at some point that [he would be killed]. I didn't know what was happening except for what I saw on TV. People who were watching TV were asking me if I had



heard from my husband and what was happening. We watched this and we watched that. They were killing women. They even killed a pregnant woman and a woman with a baby on her back. My husband was speaking to me every day and he telling me he was fine. I was so scared but after a month or two, thank God, it died down. Since we have been here, this has not happened to us and I have not experienced it personally.

**Temitope:** What was his comment on the attacks? Did he say anything about the attacks that you might want to share?

**Adedayo:** Well, I didn't watch TV when it happened. I was in a fashion school then. But I was speaking to him on WhatsApp. He sent me some pictures, of how they were burning Nigerian shops—foreigners' shops—and he said the South African police were unable to do anything because it was their people. I saw it myself on the internet. When he told me these things I immediately went to the internet. I went online, so I saw it live. I saw the comments on how the South African police were unable to do anything. It was then that I realised that when it comes to their own people, the police are there to protect them against foreigners. Your people were burning people's businesses; they were entering their shops, taking them out killing them, destroying their things and you were unable to do anything—the security was that bad. He told me about it and I saw it also on TV when I got home that day. I was praying for him that no evil would befall him.

**Temitope:** So, when it came to the decision to relocate to South Africa, did you have the impression that people were doing this to foreigners?

**Adedayo:** Ah no. You see, as a Christian—sorry to use that word often—but as a Christian, I put everything in God's hands. Our coming here was not our initiation. When we wanted to come we consulted Him and He said we should go ahead. I prayed and we prayed about it and I didn't think there was any cause for alarm. When God says go ahead, I know that all will be well. I was not scared at all because I know that this only happens once in thirty or forty years. It was not all over South Africa. It was confined to a particular province. So I wasn't scared at all.

**Temitope:** So, how are you finding it now? How are you managing to take care of three kids?

**Adedayo:** Even if we were in Nigeria, it wouldn't be that easy to do that.

**Temitope:** As you are not working and your husband is studying, how are things from a financial point of view?

**Adedayo:** Yeah, well, we thank God. God has been faithful to us. Even when we were in Nigeria, I wasn't working and my husband wasn't working. We were just hustling, yet God was there for us and He is still there for us now.

**Temitope:** Thank you so much for your time. If we need to contact you at any later day we may do that.

**Adedayo:** No problems.

**Temitope:** But, once again, thanks so much

**Adedayo:** You are welcome.

