

Charles Odii

Director General / CEO, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN)

Charles Odii is a Nigerian entrepreneur, author, and entrepreneurship-development expert. He currently serves as the Director-General/CEO of the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), where he leads the government agency responsible for promoting and supporting the growth and development of Nigeria's micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

He serves on the Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Advisory Committee of the Nigeria Employers' Consultative Association (NECA). He also serves as Chairman of the ICSS Steering Committee and Secretary of the National Council of SMEs in Nigeria.

Since assuming leadership of SMEDAN, Odii has pursued an agenda focused on expanding access to finance, strengthening entrepreneurship, improving market access, developing productive infrastructure, formalising businesses, and building stronger support systems for Nigerian MSMEs.

During his first 100 days as Director-General, SMEDAN reported 15,000 jobs created and more than ₦12 billion in SME financing facilitated at single-digit interest rates through partnerships and programmes.

One of his flagship initiatives is the Abuja Centre for Entrepreneurship (ACE), for which he helped secure US\$12 million in funding from the Republic of Korea, in partnership with the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The centre is being developed as an entrepreneurship and innovation hub providing skills development, incubation, mentorship, technology, and pathways to finance and markets.

Under his leadership, SMEDAN reported that in Q1 2025, more than 116,000 entrepreneurs received support and over 90,160 jobs were created through its programmes and partnerships.

In 2025, SMEDAN also partnered with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) to provide free registration for 250,000 MSMEs, helping informal businesses move toward formalisation and improving their prospects for accessing finance, markets and other business-support opportunities.

Odii has introduced and championed initiatives including the SMEDAN Undergraduate Internship Programme (SUIP), a dedicated Women and Youth Desk, Green Energy and Climate desk and the Grow Nigerian MSME Clinic, which connects entrepreneurs with regulators, mentors, financial institutions and business-support organisations.

Under his leadership, SMEDAN has also invested in productive infrastructure for MSMEs, including the Garment and Textile Hub and Makerspace. In partnership with UNDP, a 120 KVA solar power system was installed at the Abuja Garment and Fashion

Hub to provide more reliable electricity for entrepreneurs using the facility.

In recognition of his public-sector leadership and entrepreneurship-development work, Odii was inducted into the Hall of Fame by the Most Influential People of African Descent (MIPAD) in 2025. He has also received the Sun Newspaper Public Service Award and the Independent Newspaper Public Sector CEO of the Year Award.

Beyond his role at SMEDAN, Odii serves as a National Policy Fellow of the Abuja Chamber of Commerce and Industry. He is an alumnus of the U.S. Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP), a certified Business Development Service Provider, a mentor with the U.S. Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI), and an entrepreneurship coach.

His academic and executive education includes programmes at Harvard University, the University of Cambridge and Lagos Business School.

He holds a bachelor's degree from Covenant University and a master's degree from Pan Atlantic University.

Through his work in government, entrepreneurship, policy and private-sector development, Charles Odii focuses on building stronger institutions and creating an enabling environment in which Nigerian entrepreneurs and MSMEs can grow, create jobs and compete in domestic, regional and international markets.