



REJA
INITIATIVE



ANNUAL REPORT

2025



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2025 In Numbers



200

Beneficiaries Represented



40

Beneficiaries discharged



220

Courts hearings



5

Healing circles



60years

Cumulative Number of Years spent in detention



34

Persons Reintegration

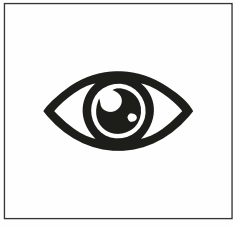


3,800

Total Beneficiaries impacted



VISION



A fair and accountable Africa where everyone has equal access to justice regardless of their economic situation.

MISSION



To close the inequality gap and dismantle systemic barriers to justice for incarcerated people and communities at risk through restorative justice interventions, tech-enabled legal support and reintegration programs.



WHO WE ARE

We are a Nigerian social-impact organisation working to dismantle systemic barriers to justice for incarcerated people and communities at risk.

We do this by providing legal support, promoting restorative justice and the reintegration of justice-involved persons through different pathways.

We encourage alternatives to punishment by centering accountability, healing, and community participation.

We collaborate with correctional institutions, law enforcement agencies, civil society groups, and community stakeholders to reduce unnecessary incarceration, strengthen legal protections for vulnerable populations, and improve social outcomes for returning citizens.

We seek to build a justice ecosystem that prioritises dignity, fairness, and sustainable community safety across Nigeria and the wider African region through evidence-based interventions and partnerships.



Theory of Change

THE NEED

PROBLEM

From Nigeria to the rest of Africa, we face a profound crisis with over 1.4 million people currently incarcerated in overcrowded prisons. In Nigeria, over 70% of them are awaiting trial because they cannot afford legal representation, others for offences that could be resolved through restorative justice and non-custodial sanctions. We are working towards a future where this no longer happens.

PEOPLE

1. Indigent inmates in forgotten in prisons.
2. Community members unfairly targeted by law enforcement.
3. Criminal Justice institutions.

REASON

To reinvent corrections and dismantle the systems that perpetuate the prolonged and unjust incarceration of indigent people

THE WORK

ACTIVITIES

1. Creating Rapid Legal Support units connecting volunteer lawyers to people forgotten in prisons.
2. Training and strategic engagements with stakeholders on accessible Restorative Justice programs for all.
3. Prioritize community reintegration of formerly incarcerated people.
4. Promote our tech-based solution for access to justice

INPUT

1. Volunteer lawyers
2. Funding
3. Increased staff strength
4. Collaboration with 45 justice focused CSO's across Nigeria
5. Criminal Justice Consultants
6. Tech development support

PARTNERS

1. Institutional partners-
 - The Nigerian Correctional Service.
 - The Nigerian Judiciary
 - Law Enforcement agencies
2. The Ministry of Interior
3. Funders/Investors
4. Community/religious leaders
5. Civil society organizations

TANGIBLE DELIVERABLE

1. Volunteer lawyers provide free legal aid to people on needs basis.
2. Minor cases are successfully resolved and diverted from prison through restorative justice interventions.
3. Training for Institutions and CSOs on RJ model practice directions & reintegration policies.
4. Formerly incarcerated persons are supported through reentry programs.

BIG IDEA

1. Integration of Restorative Justice
2. Proper reintegration of formerly incarcerated persons.
3. Adoption of technology to drive access to justice

MISSION

Closing the justice and inequality gap for people behind bars and communities at risk through restorative justice, early intervention legal support and reintegration programs.

THE RESULTS

10-YEAR TARGET

To have reduced awaiting trial detentions and unjust incarcerations by 30% through prompt legal interventions, restorative justice programs, and successful reintegration of formerly incarcerated persons.

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

- Reduced pretrial detention and awaiting trial backlog.
- Decongested prisons and reduced recidivism rates.
- An equitable justice system focused on accountability and respect for human rights.
- Improved public trust in the justice process & strengthened collaboration between law enforcement and communities.
- Efficient and organised tracking of criminal cases

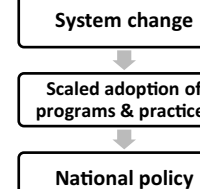
SHORT-TERM OUTCOME

- Increased legal representation for indigent persons and faster resolution of cases
- Increased adoption restorative justice programs as alternatives to incarceration
- Reduction in the police to prison pipeline and fewer wrongly incarcerated people
- Improved reintegration of formerly incarcerated people
- Integration of technology for improved case management in criminal justice administration

BEHAVIOUR CHANGES EXPECTED

- Improved access to justice for marginalized groups.
- Improved accountability in criminal justice administration
- Increased acceptance of restorative justice practices by institutions and beneficiaries.
- Engagement of institutional partners on our behalf by CSO's

PATHWAY TO SCALE



VISION

A fair and accountable Africa where everyone has equal access to justice regardless of their economic situation.

REFLECTIONS FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

When I look back at where REJA stood just twelve months ago, and then look at what this year has brought forth, I am reminded, again, that confronting systemic barriers to justice is slow, stubborn, and occasionally, breathtakingly beautiful. It is our documented reality that Nigeria incarcerates more people than it prosecutes, causing the majority of those behind bars to be awaiting trial, not serving a sentence. These are low earning individuals largely without legal representation from the point of arraignment in court and so for many of them, the years pass, not because the system has found them guilty, but simply because no one has been looking for them. This is one gap REJA was built to close by connecting lawyers with people without legal representation in courtrooms, across prisons and across communities.

In 2025, that commitment produced numbers that humble us, and behind every single one of those figures is a name, a face, and a family that received a different answer from the one that the system had prepared for them. This was also the year one of our long-held vision took physical shape in Nasarawa State. We opened the doors of the Restored Voices Shelter, the first transitional home for formerly incarcerated individuals in northern Nigeria. This reintegration and reentry shelter clearly showed that we



did not just fight for people's release, we thought about what comes next and it now stands as a reminder to every person who enters that there is a place where they can rebuild their lives with dignity.

Our systems change model led us to rooms where we engaged the systems that shape access to justice in Nigeria and produced a landmark partnership with the Legal Aid Council of Nigeria on our proposed amendment to the 2011 Legal Aid Act and the establishment of Legal Aid Booths within courtrooms to ensure access to justice meets people at the point they need it most.

This year we also worked with the Nigerian Correctional Service to introduce healing circles inside facilities in two states and on a brighter side, we won two landmark court judgments, one where a Nasarawa High Court ordered the Commissioner of Police to pay two million naira in damages for the unlawful detention of a man our team represented.

This annual report is, above all, a tribute to the people who make this work possible. To our lawyers, both staff and volunteers, who appear in court every day for people who have no one else, our paralegals and the communities,

we are truly grateful. Thank you for your quiet, consistent presence which remains the backbone of everything REJA has built.

We are immensely grateful to our donors, supporters, and partners both institutions and individuals, who have walked alongside us this year. Your collaboration turns our ambitions into action, we do not take your support for granted. Not for a single day.

Once again, thank you for believing in this mission and for choosing, with us, to act. There is still so much to do. And we have never been more ready.

With gratitude and determination.



Osariemen Grace Shobanke.



MOMENTS THAT SHAPED OUR YEAR

Launching of 1st Half Way Home in Nassarawa State/Northern Region of Nigeria

The Restored Voices Shelter, the first transitional shelter for formerly incarcerated individuals in Nasarawa State is now operational. This initiative was designed as a self-sustaining model, intentionally led by people who have walked the same path and understand the realities of reintegration firsthand.

The Restored Voices Shelter represents a significant milestone in our reintegration efforts. We hope this initiative inspires similar models across the country, as it is intended to be the first of many shelters to be established across different regions of Nigeria.



REJA Takes Bold Steps to Scale Access to Justice delivery across Nigeria

We are working with the **Legal Aid Council of Nigeria (LACON)** in Abuja to expand the current legal aid framework to provide speedy and efficient justice delivery to indigent persons across Nigeria. We are also pushing for a policy change to the **2011 Legal Aid Act**, with recommendations aimed at integrating restorative justice and aligning the law with more people-centred approaches to justice.

we are excited to unveil this new project. We believe it would solve the problem of lack of access to legal representation at its root.



Deepening our work on Restorative Justice in Nigeria, Abuja



We are collaborating with the **Restorative Justice Centre, Abuja** to strengthen restorative justice practices within the Federal Capital Territory.

Together, we are exploring practical ways to expand the Centre's impact especially through increased community outreach, enhanced facilitator training, and encouraging greater utilization of the Centre by courts through case referrals.

We look forward with optimism to the anticipated passage of the **Restorative Justice Practice** Direction by the Chief Judge. Once adopted, this policy will mark a significant step toward institutionalizing restorative justice and equipping judicial officers to implement it effectively.

REJA Partners with NYSC to design a Bold Access to Justice Initiative

REJA has commenced strategic talks with the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) to launch a transformative access to justice programme aimed at providing timely legal advice and support to indigent persons at the earliest stages of the criminal justice process.

Through this initiative, NYSC will deploy young lawyers to courts across the country during their mandatory one-year service, ensuring that individuals who cannot afford legal representation are not left without a voice at critical moments such as remand and arraignment.

This will be a bold step toward closing the justice gap—helping to ensure that no one is unjustly remanded simply because they lack access to a lawyer.



OUR IMPACT STORIES

Mark Regains Freedom After 3 Years Lost to a Missing Court Document



Mark (pseudonym) spent three long years behind bars after being arraigned in February 2022. He was left in detention awaiting legal advice from the Department of Public Prosecutions (DPP), advice that had, unknown to him, gone missing in transit.

When we stepped in, we filed a fundamental rights action against the government. During the proceedings, it was discovered that the Legal Advice which was prepared long ago clearly stated that Mark should not be prosecuted but Mark didn't know and nobody knew because no-one was searching.

Mark's ordeal reflects a systemic problem of missing files, poor case management, and the absence of advocacy leaving innocent people forgotten behind bars. Sadly, many others still suffer this fate today and we want this to change.

67-Year-Old Man Freed After 5 Years of Delayed Justice

David (pseudonym), a 67-year-old man, regained his freedom on 19th May 2025 after spending five years behind bars due to repeated adjournments and prolonged delays in his case. Arraigned in February 2020, his trial stalled for years with no meaningful progress.

The court eventually struck out the case for lack of diligent prosecution, bringing an end to five unnecessary years of suffering but David did not have to lose so much time, the system failed him.

We remain committed to pushing for reforms that prevent stories like David's from happening again.



From Incarceration To Healing; Sampson's Story

Sampson (pseudonym) regained his freedom after spending more than a year in custody for an alleged theft. His case was eventually struck out for lack of diligent prosecution. Sampson's story highlights the systemic issues that continue to affect children in conflict with the law within the justice system.

As a minor who endured prolonged detention, Sampson now requires meaningful support to heal and rebuild. Our team is prioritizing post-release care, healing, and accountability, because we believe every child, especially those trapped in cycles of poverty and neglect deserve not just legal support, but a pathway to wholeness and reintegration.



Restorative Justice Intervention Leads to Freedom After Three Years



This year, we successfully facilitated the release of a defendant who had been incarcerated since his arraignment in 2022. Despite several setbacks, including a change in presiding judges, our volunteer lawyer remained persistent.

Through sustained dialogue and mediation, the complainant and defendant reached an amicable out-of-court settlement. Following the complainant's formal application to withdraw the matter, the court struck out the case, bringing an end to the defendant's **three-year detention**.



A second chance for Matthew

When we met Matthew (pseudonym), he had already spent five months in custody on charges of theft and trespass. After reviewing his case, we noted that he was a first-time offender who had already pleaded guilty.

Our team made a plea for leniency, highlighting the time he had spent in custody and the fact that a prolonged trial was unnecessary. The Court agreed and sentenced him to three months' imprisonment, counting the five months he had already served.

Matthew walked out of court a free man that day.

A Victim of Circumstance: Noah's Story

Noah was arrested in 2024 while visiting friends who happened to be under investigation, and despite having no connection to the alleged offence, he found himself trapped in the criminal justice system with no one to defend him. Everything changed when our dedicated volunteer lawyer took up Noah's case. He pursued the matter relentlessly, ensuring Noah's voice was finally heard. After a year of waiting for justice, Noah finally walked free. Stories like Noah's remind us why access to justice is not a privilege, it is a right, and one we must continue to fight for.



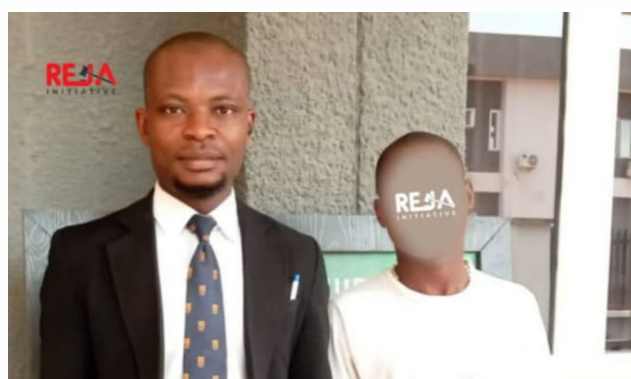
Uzo Was Incarcerated Because Someone Wanted To Teach Him A 'lesson'

Uzo was arrested following a domestic dispute and, in an attempt to "teach him a lesson," he was remanded in custody without being formally charged to court. Months later, when he was finally brought before a Magistrate, the court found that there was no case to answer and promptly discharged him.

With no family to turn to and no means of support upon his release, the Magistrate reached out to our team to provide post-incarceration support, which we were glad to offer.

Uzo's experience highlights the urgent need for stronger enforcement of existing laws to prevent wrongful accusations from resulting in unlawful detention. No one should lose months or years of their life simply because they lack connections or access to legal support.





Promoting Accountability Through Non-Custodial Sentences

We represented three women and ensured that their cases were resolved in the best possible way, prioritising accountability and restoration over incarceration.

Peace (pseudonym) was charged with assaulting a police officer in May 2025. During the course of the matter, her mother and sister, Mercy and Grace (pseudonyms), became frustrated with the slow progress of the case and, due to a lack of proper information and patience, assaulted the lawyer handling the matter.

All three women were brought before the Honourable Court, where they were seriously cautioned against repeating the offence. In recognising the circumstances of the case, the Court imposed non-custodial sentences, ordering them to perform community service within the court premises.

We are grateful to judicial officers who adopt non-custodial sanctions in deserving cases, choosing restorative outcomes that promote accountability while reducing congestion in correctional facilities.

WORKING TOGETHER FOR JUSTICE; OUR ENGAGEMENTS WITH STAKEHOLDERS



Courtesy Visit to the Chief Judge of Ogun State



Courtesy Visit to Global Rights





Hope Behind Bars Africa's Visit to the Restored Voices Shelter



Stakeholders' Workshop on Restorative Justice in Edo State





Action Group on Free Civic Space Retreat



Courtesy Visit To The Commissioner Of Police, Ogun State

We paid a courtesy visit to the Commissioner of Police, Ogun State Command, at the Police Headquarters, Elewera, Abeokuta. We discussed core areas of our work and explored opportunities for collaboration with the Command, particularly our proposal to integrate restorative justice principles into police training curricula to promote restorative policing across communities in Ogun State.

This visit marked an important step toward strengthening police-community relations and embedding restorative practices within law enforcement processes in Ogun State.



Introducing Healing Circles To The Nigerian Correctional Service, Ogun State



We paid a working visit to the Controller of Corrections, Ogun State, and the Deputy Controller of Corrections at the Ibara Custodial Centre, Abeokuta, to formally introduce our plan to implement restorative justice healing circles within correctional facilities in the state.

During the visit, we outlined our vision of using healing circles to foster open dialogue, promote accountability, and support the emotional and psychological healing of incarcerated individuals. This restorative approach is designed to strengthen rehabilitation and improve prospects for successful reintegration back into society.



We look forward to building a strong partnership with the Nigerian Correctional Service to ensure this initiative creates meaningful, transformative change and promotes a culture of compassion, empathy, and understanding within the correctional facilities.

Courtesy Visit To The Nigerian Correctional Service, Edo State

Our team paid a courtesy visit to the Nigerian Correctional Service headquarters in Edo State to explore collaborative opportunities across our core program areas.

We had meaningful discussions on the operational challenges faced within the correctional system, including logistical barriers that hinder the timely transportation of incarcerated individuals to court for their trials, leading to avoidable delays. We documented these concerns and expressed our commitment to working together to develop sustainable, long-term solutions.



Advancing Non-custodial Sentencing In The Nigerian Correctional Service

We participated in the review of the newly developed Non-Custodial Module of the Corrections Information Management System (CIMS), organized by the Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption (RoLAC) Programme in Abuja. The new module aims to strengthen the efficiency, transparency, and monitoring of non-custodial sentences nationwide, an important step toward a more effective and humane justice system.



REJA Participates in Correctional Reform Grantee Partners' Retreat

Restorative Justice for Africa (REJA), alongside three other organisations, participated in a two-day Correctional Reform Grantee Partners' Retreat organised by the Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption Programme (RoLAC) and implemented by International IDEA.

The retreat provided an important platform to review progress and achievements in ongoing correctional reform initiatives, identify shared challenges and opportunities, explore practical and people-centred solutions, and strengthen collaboration among grantee partners to maximise shared resources and knowledge.



REACHING COMMUNITIES, CHANGING LIVES



Outreach With CELSIR at Juvenile Correctional Home, Abeokuta



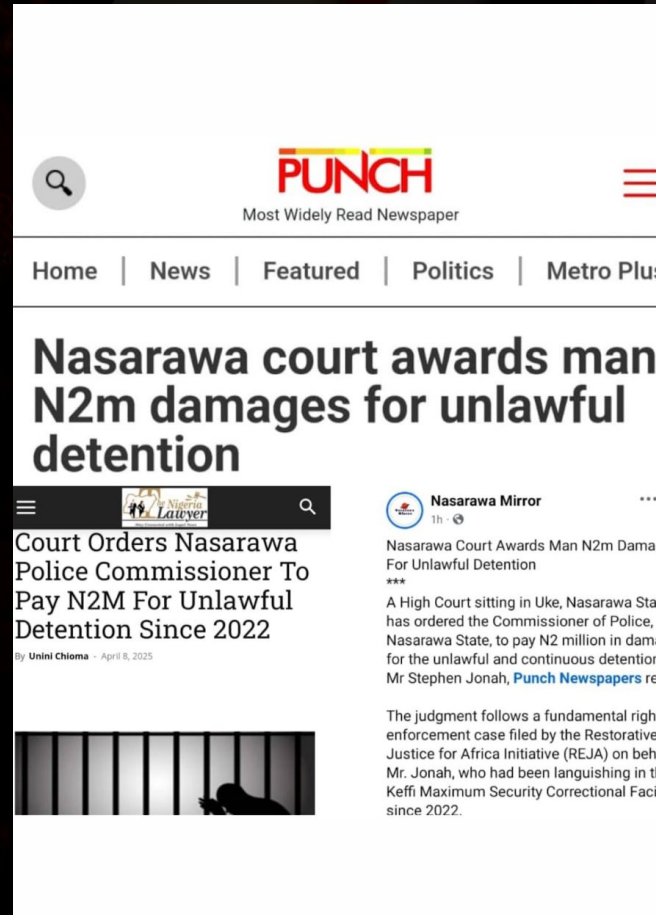
Outreach at Juvenile Correctional Home, Edo State



Outreach at The Medium Correctional Centre, Keffi



OUR WORK IN THE NEWS



LEARNING, SHARING AND BUILDING CAPACITY

Building Capacity at the European Forum for Restorative Justice Winter Academy

Building internal capacity matters a great deal to us at REJA because we want to create meaningful and lasting impact. To lead effectively, we are committed to learning, growth, and staying grounded in global best practices.

This commitment informed our participation in the European Forum for Restorative Justice Winter Academy, an institution that has been at the forefront of advancing restorative justice for over 30 years.

The insights and skills gained from this training are already shaping our work, strengthening our programmes, and deepening our approach to restorative justice. As a forward-thinking organisation, we remain intentional about embedding restorative principles and practices within the criminal justice systems across Nigeria and Africa.



Restorative Justice Week 2025



Restorative Justice: Alternative or Complement to the Nigerian Criminal Justice System?

Speakers:

Moderator:

Osariemen O. Shobanke

Zakiyya Haruna

Esther O. Adewusi

Friday, 19th
September

2PM
PROMPT



Register via:



Who Deserves a Second Chance? Restorative Justice and the Ethics of Presidential Pardons in Nigeria.

Moderator:

Esther O. Adewusi

Speakers:

Ubose Olorunfemi
Lecturer, Faculty of Law,
University of Benin

Chibueze Maduka
Head of legal,
Restorative Justice for Africa



Twitter Space

Friday, 24th of October

6pm Prompt

REJA INITIATIVE #NOV. 16TH - 22ND

WELCOME TO RESTORATIVE JUSTICE WEEK 2025!

This week, we join the global community in celebrating how far restorative justice has come, honouring the progress we have made while also looking ahead to the possibilities and promise of the future.

REJA INITIATIVE Restorative Justice Week

Advancing Restorative Justice in Nigeria: Measuring Success, Understanding Challenges, and Charting the Future

Moderator:

Esther O. Adewusi

Speakers:

Jessica Imuenkeme (Ph.D)
Lecturer, Ifeawale University

Friday, 21st
November
2025

5pm

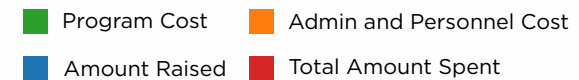
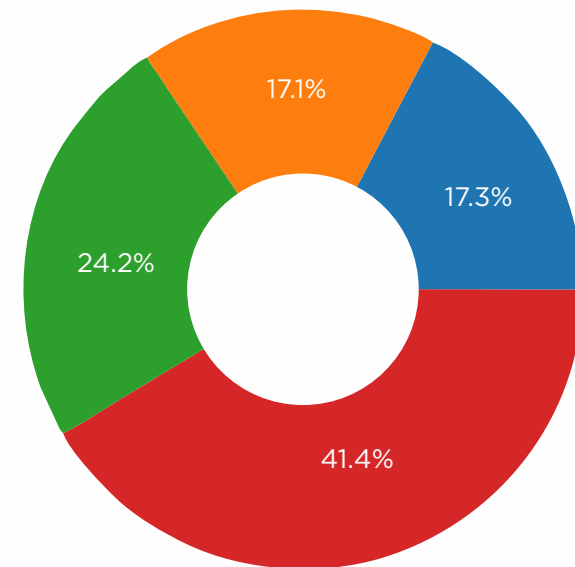
reja_initiative Restorative Justice for Africa www.rejafrica.org

FINANCIALS

Amount Raised	₹45,167,730
Administrative and Personnel cost	₹44,850,870
Program Costs	₹63,327,551
Total Amount Spent	₹108,178,421

Administrative and Personnel cost includes payment of Transportation cost for Volunteer Lawyers.

Program costs includes filing fees, trainings, restorative justice advocacy, reintegration of formerly incarcerated persons etc.



CLOSE THE JUSTICE GAP

There is still a wide justice gap in Africa between those who can get justice and those who cannot. Why? Many people simply do not have the resources to pay for a lawyer.

Your donation helps close this justice gap and ensures that people do not fall through the cracks.

It is not enough to feel for those denied justice. Real change happens when we act."



Naira:

1482564640

USD:

1608884449

Restorative Justice for Africa

Access Bank

1306749602

Restorative Justice for Africa

Providus Bank



THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE MISSION

Team Members



Osariemen Omoruyi-Shobanke (Mrs) - Executive Director



Chibueze Maduka - Head of Legal



Eguono Olorunfemi (Mrs) - Operations Manager



Khadijah Gidado (Mrs) - Co-ordinator, Kano State



Gloria Osahenrumwen (Mrs) - Co-ordinator, Edo State



James Odi - Programs/Legal Officer



Eno Harrison - Legal Associate



Innocent Jonathan - Admin/Finance Officer



Hammed Moyosade - M & E Officer



Esther Adewusi - Junior Associate



Ruth Garuba - Junior Associate

Volunteers

Peter Ogbu, Ubose Olorunfemi, Peculiar Oluomachukwu, Joshua Braimoh, Gbemi Alana, Lilian Chukwu, Abigail Eigbejiale, Gift Ihaza, Sarah Umukoro, Greg Atalor, Treasure Osazuwa, Emmanuella Ejemai, Victoria Achilihu, Azeez, IsiakaObunike Love, Musa Dolapo Omiwole, Modupe Tolulope, Aminat Apena, Chiedozie Mba, Glitter Luka, Tomidiea Gillis, Victoria Bennet, Kathryn Esther, Adedeji Adebususyi Raphael, Adeyeri Tobi, Chisom, Jaleel Abolaji, Ojo Oluwaseun, Yinka, Efeovbokhan Ofure, Ochanya Zoe, Abisoeye Oriyomi, Anfani Deborah, Fayemi Anjoyaoluwa, Gift Igbikwe, Precious, Abisoeye Emmanuel, Caleb Pamilerin Sobaloju

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