

As Director of Movin'On LAB Africa (African Mobilities Observatory OMA), Charlène leads the development of initiatives in sustainable mobility and the participation of the Observatory in projects of general interest in Africa. In Côte d'Ivoire, where she is based, this includes close engagement with the local ecosystem, and the Michelin Group.. She is also the Community Manager of the Observatory, contributing to initiatives related to sustainable and inclusive development of mobility and transport within African cities and by creating an active community of experts, companies, professionals, startups and citizens.

When she first began her work in the transport sector, Charlène Kouassi wasn't focused solely on women's perspectives, but rather the broader experience of people and finding ways to address their specific needs. This approach has carried through to today. For Charlène, a feminist transport system is one where women's perspectives are perceived and understood equally – where the place of women is not above anyone else, but equal to any other, whether they be men, women, children, the elderly, etc.

"I don't think through a specific gender lens when talking about mobility. I really focus on mobility groups and the multiplicity of persons that compose society."

Charlène, who was born in France, adopted her Ivoirian nationality four and a half years ago, becoming a dual citizen of her birth country and that of her family's heritage. One year after she moved to Abidjan she joined the Michelin Initiative 'African Mobilities Observatory' to work in the mobility field. She believes the duality of her culture and being a Black woman has helped her in her approach.

"I think it is not necessarily important to shout, 'I am Black, I am woman.' Doing the work in a way that I am proud of shows other women that it is possible to work in this so-called male environment. You must sometimes speak louder than others to be

heard and understood so we have a long way to go to achieve equality for women."

Charlène recounts early in her career in Côte d'Ivoire when she realized the importance of having a strong voice. In a country where the respect and obedience towards the elders are key in and out the professional sphere, she allowed her manager to take credit for the work she and her colleagues were doing. But it didn't feel right and she eventually stood up for herself, understanding that despite being the "new girl" with less experience, her insights were valuable.

"The experience helped me see that at the end of the day, even if you are young or less experienced, your voice matters and you should speak out. People may not see things like you do and think you are wrong, but there will always be those who see otherwise. You are not alone. Through your work, you will get what you deserve."

Now as Director of Movin'On LAB Africa, Charlène uses her work and experience to challenge traditional thinking about mobility in Africa. She focuses on great examples of projects and initiatives that impact cities and people's lives positively, believing that when you tell a good story or share an experience, people will identify with it.

Charlène Kouassi

DIRECTOR, MOVIN'ON LAB
AFRICA (AFRICAN MOBILITIES
OBSERVATORY OMA)

COTE D'IVOIRE



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She has been invited to contribute to many initiatives like the SLOCAT Partnership, and while she could only focus on what is trendy at the moment like electric mobility and decarbonization of transport, she chooses to focus on inclusive mobility solutions, which she believes African nations should include on top of their strategy, even if it's not something readily visible every day.

“Focusing on women's needs is good and essential, but we need to include men's opinions, too. We should continuously move toward that multi-dimensional direction. It is not only the poor and the rich, black, non-black, man, woman but the combination of everyone and communities. It is really important to have this inclusive approach to achieve sustainability.”

“I use Movin'On and my work to show how important inclusive mobility is, especially in low-income countries where unfortunately we tend to reproduce the errors of others and copy the Western models. We have the opportunity to shift towards a more inclusive and cleaner mobility sector. But the pace of African cities is different from the rest of the world yet the world is pushing us further and faster on a certain direction, but we have to achieve our goals step by step according to our own priorities and needs and be able to power projects and people inside out instead of parachuting in solutions.”

Although still early in her career, Charlène's advice for her younger self is simple: Do things with passion, be true to what you believe, and be patient.

“Patience is a strong quality. A lot of people say, ‘Why don't you start something yourself, build your own business, or work for an African company?’ I tell them that every sector has its ups and downs, but it is our role to shape it the way we want it to be.”

For others who want to enter this field, she emphasizes the value of being among other women and being open to the world and the diversity of people and backgrounds within it. She sees feminism as a strong word, sometimes too narrow, especially in Africa where it is not seen in the same way as in Europe. For Charlène, taking in all perspectives is the way to achieving a more inclusive mobility space.