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The Dream Catchers dance group pose in the backyard of their house in Ikorodu, a poor suburb on the outskirts of Lagos. — AFP photos



Seyi Oluyole and the Dream Catchers dance group perform at an event.



Seyi Oluyole and the Dream Catchers dance group pose for a picture after performing at an event

## Lagos street kids dance their way to fame with viral hit

A group of Nigerian street children have been transformed into celebrities thanks to a viral dance video that attracted the attention of singer Rihanna and supermodel Naomi Campbell.

The "Dream Catchers" were seen in a video earlier this year dancing like double-jointed puppets in front of a battered red bus on wasteland. Not long ago, the six boys and six girls aged six to 16 had no idea about choreography. Now they're dancing in the video of Nigerian singer Amada's homage to the country's Super Eagles, who are playing in the World Cup football finals in Russia.

"What we've done this year is huge. We have gone very, very far," said Seyi Oluyole, 26, the group's dance teacher and tutor. In early March, she posted the latest video of her smiling prodigies on the Dream Catchers' Instagram page, wiggling along to an Afrobeat tune from popstar Wizkid. The internet lit up when Rihanna, then US producer P. Diddy, shared the clip on their own accounts and it was seen more than 2.8 million times. Several weeks later, Naomi Campbell, in Lagos for the annual fashion week in April, visited the young dancers in Ikorodu, a poor suburb on the outskirts of the megacity. In a public relations triumph, the children jumped into her arms before a horde of cameras.

### 'A second chance'

The Dream Catchers have been hot property ever since, whether it's to collaborate with other performers or to receive prizes. The governor of Lagos, Akinwunmi Ambode, invited some of them on stage for world children's day on May 27. Oluyole founded the dance troupe four years ago to help street children in Lagos dream of a better future and to find their way back into school. At the time, she was leading a group of dancers from her church and every Sunday

noticed there were large numbers of poor kids from the area keen to take their mind off hunger and boredom.

"They used to come to church in numbers, they always wanted to come and dance," she said. "After a while, I realized that most of them were not in school. They didn't even speak good English." According to the UN children's agency Unicef, Nigeria has 10.5 million out-of-school children—the highest in the world. Oluyole herself was 12 when her father lost his job at a bank and the entire family found itself living on the street for two years.

"At least I was lucky enough to keep going in school because it was something important for my parents. But I've seen the devastating effect of poverty," she added. She now houses a dozen children in happy chaos in her three-room flat. On the walls are pictures of icons who came from modest backgrounds such as Nelson Mandela, Oprah Winfrey or Serena Williams. A motto in capital letters reads: "EVERY DAY IS A SECOND CHANCE."



Seyi Oluyole and the Dream Catchers dance group pose for a picture before performing at an event.

### Read, write, dance

Oluyole persuaded parents to let them take charge of their children. She pays their school fees—about 100,000 naira (\$280, 240 euros) — with what she earns writing television screenplays, supplemented by help from sponsors. The dance troupe practices in the evening but if they don't do well at school the children are not allowed to dance for a few days, which they say is "the worst punishment". Busola, 13, has large almond-shaped eyes and a tomboy's haircut.

## "Every day is a second chance"

Nicknamed "T-boy", she has spent most of her life begging for "money and food" in Lagos traffic jams with her little brother.

Now she says she wants to be a "dancer, actress or hairdresser". "I used to speak only Yoruba. Other children were laughing at me," added Dami, 10, who squatted with his mother in an abandoned house for several years. "Now I go to school, I can read and write. My entire life has changed." Oluyole said the troupe has not made any real money despite their new-found fame, other than donations of food or clothing. "Everyone invites us to perform but most people just want to exploit the kids for their product, to get famous... they don't pay us any money, or very little," she said. Oluyole wants to catch her own dream: To open a "real" dance school in Lagos. — AFP



Seyi Oluyole and the Dream Catchers dance group perform at an event.



The Dream Catchers dance group perform on stage at an event in Lagos.

## 3 pros discuss creating an outdoor room

Designers often talk about the perfect "outdoor living room" — a deck or patio that combines the comfort and style of indoor decorating with the pleasure of relaxing outside. But what separates these outdoor entertaining spaces from more typically decorated backyards? We've asked three interior designers — Brett Beldock of New York-based Brett Design Inc., Abbe Fenimore of Studio Ten25 in Dallas and Dan Mazzarini of the design firm BHDM — about what items they use to elevate a simple deck or patio to true "outdoor room" status.

### The perfect rug

"Adding textiles underfoot," says Mazzarini, brings "that added tactile quality that's expected to be only indoors, and helps sort of redefine the outdoor space." Beldock agrees, and says companies like Sunbrella and Perennials offer soft rugs made of durable, dyed acrylic yarns in gorgeous patterns and colors. "It doesn't feel like

plastic," Beldock says, but "you can hose it down." And fortunately, says Fenimore, you don't have to invest a lot — even big-box stores like Sam's Club sometimes offer good-quality outdoor rugs in geometric prints or stripes.

Some of these may actually dry more quickly after rain than more expensive, thicker outdoor rugs. Choosing a rug that drains and dries well is especially important if you have a concrete floor or little direct sunlight. But, Fenimore says, don't skimp too much on the price: Very thin acrylic rugs may not last long and may fade quickly. In choosing the number of rugs and their placement, consider defining separate entertaining areas: one rug for the dining area under the table and chairs, and another to define a seating area that serves as a living room.

### Living room lighting

Typical outdoor lighting can be harsh and unflattering, and "overhead lighting is nobody's friend," says Mazzarini.



Photo provided by Abbe Fenimore shows fans for hot days and space heaters for cold nights can help make a patio feel even more like an "outdoor living room," as seen in this backyard sitting area designed by Abbe Fenimore.



Photo provided by Abbe Fenimore shows how sofa pillows, as seen in this outdoor seating area designed by Texas-based interior designer Abbe Fenimore, bring a touch of indoor comfort to a deck or patio.



Photo provided by Abbe Fenimore shows an outdoor rug in a rooftop sitting area designed by Abbe Fenimore, which brings the softness of a living room to an outdoor space. — AP photos

So look for outdoor table lamps and floor lamps to add the soft glow of indoor lighting. Although they vary in what weather conditions they can handle, outdoor lamps can be used throughout much of the year, Mazzarini says.

Fenimore agrees: "Bringing in lamplight, especially outside, is really beautiful and subtle," she says, and it's easy to find a wide range of styles and prices for outdoor lamps at home decor retailers. As a finishing touch, Beldock loves adding to the glow by using lots of candles with glass hurricane covers.

### Temperature control

Managing the air is another indoor touch you can work with outdoors. For clients in Texas, Fenimore often suggests fans to circulate the air on an outdoor patio. At her own home, "we have a wall-mounted fan hanging under one of the eaves," she says, to keep air moving and hopefully deter mosquitoes. For colder evenings, standing space heaters can take the chill out of a space and complement the warmth from a fireplace.

### Upholstery and fabrics

Just as with your indoor living room, choose a comfortable, stylish sofa for outdoors and pair it with a loveseat or comfortable upholstered chairs. Indoor/outdoor fabrics have come a long way, these designers say, so choose a

texture that feels like indoor upholstery. And don't just stick with one color, says Beldock: "Mix and match fabrics the way you do in an indoor situation." Although outdoor sofa styles vary widely, Beldock says the sectional "peanut sofa" by Bonaldo is popular for outdoor living rooms, and it's available in a wide range of soft outdoor fabrics.

Velvety, chenille fabrics durable enough for outdoors have become popular, says Fenimore. Despite their cozy texture, she says, these fabrics don't trap heat and can be comfortable all summer long. To complete the look, add throw pillows to your outdoor sofa. Many outdoor throw pillows are available with stuffing that can dry easily without getting moldy.

Another option, Fenimore says, is using beautiful indoor throw pillows when you entertain outside and then bringing them in when the party is over. A deep pile of pillows will bring indoor comfort to your outdoor sofa, encouraging guests to stay and relax, she says. Finishing touch: Fenimore suggests keeping a container filled with soft, lightweight throw blankets so that guests lounging outdoors in the evening can have that extra touch of softness and luxury if the wind begins to blow. — AP