

Magic Pants



In 2002, Funmi Lawal, now 54, flew back to her home in South London from Dubai to have her baby. She thought it would be a straightforward pregnancy, but doctors couldn't control her blood pressure. Seven days later, after her baby was born in hospital, the unimaginable happened.

Funmi suffered a major stroke. "I couldn't walk, I couldn't talk, I couldn't do anything on my right side for about seven months," she says. After about three months, she could use her hand again, but she was unable to speak or walk fully for a year.

She says: "So when I started walking, I needed to bend and stretch whilst putting on my underwear. But there was nothing on the market. There was nothing that would help me put on my underwear myself."



Funmi Lawal, MD/CEO, Clip-Knix

Already, Funmi was beginning to formulate an idea that could fill a gaping hole in the market, which would eventually become a business, Clip-Knix. She says: "I had dialysis because the stroke damaged my kidneys, so I was on dialysis for a year and nine months, and I got a transplant in 2011. "And funnily enough, 2011 I checked again and there was nothing on the market. 2018, I decided to go for it. I had no capital. It took a year to develop, and another year to produce, and we finally got the audit completed this time last year."

What Funmi had created was a pair of knickers that you can put on while standing up, by simply passing it through your legs and clipping it at the side. Funmi was desperate to name the brand Snap-Pants – she laughs this was quickly vetoed by her sister and friends.

They eventually decided on Clip-Knix. She says her clients are elderly people, disabled people and those who use wheelchairs, as well as cancer patients and pregnant women.



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“If you have a bad back, you can’t bend down. Anyone who can’t bend down or stretch because of pain or mobility issues,” she says. “Some people have come to me and told me that before they used to buy underwear and just cut it at the side, and pin it with safety pins.

“But this comes readymade,” she laughs. “It’s glorious.” But one aspect of the brand which is incredibly important to her is that the underwear is ‘sexy’ as well as practical. “I want people who wear it not to lose their femininity,” she explains. “There is nothing in the world like this. Nothing that resembles it or is even close to it.” She explains that disabled people are not represented by mainstream brands, particularly underwear and feminine wear. It’s important to her that disabled and chronically ill people are reminded that they can feel sexy too, and that her knickers represent that. And it’s already booming. Funmi notes that she now sells as far as Australia and the US. “I’m working my socks off,” she says. But the journey hasn’t been easy, she explains, as launching a small business during Covid-19 is quite a feat. “I’m an extreme minority,” she says. “I’m disabled, I’m female, I’m black, I am Muslim. I’m doing four jobs at the same time, despite my health,” she continues. “I’m doing everything possible.” And that’s not the only difficulty she’s had to bare during the journey. Sadly, one of Funmi’s children passed away last year. But she remains grateful for what she has and determined to keep making a difference, and speaks with audible pride about the product she created. She says: “It’s beautifully made, with organic cotton and lace. The picture doesn’t even really show the texture, but if you see it with your own eyes, and feel it Full Page Advert– oh, it’s marvellous.”

InvestAfrica Magazine - What is your story?

Funmi: At the age of 35, I suffered a severe stroke. Leaving me with reduced mobility, I couldn’t walk, it was extremely painful to bend down, and getting dressed felt like a constant everyday battle. Our two babies were both born prematurely, due to preeclampsia. What I didn’t immediately know was that the second bout of preeclampsia would have a long lasting impact on my future health.

On the eve of our second baby’s naming ceremony, just seven days after her birth, I developed a serious headache that paracetamol could not shift. Later that night, a sharp pain woke me from my sleep and I in turn woke my husband for help. It was then that I had a stroke, followed by a serious bleed on the brain.

We arrived at St Thomas’s Hospital, in central London, to discover that there was no neurosurgeon on duty because it was the weekend. I was critically ill and while the

hospital staff were conducting a CT scan, my heart stopped. My family was informed that I had little chance of survival and even if I did manage to survive, it was likely that I would be disabled for life.

Luckily for me, I was later moved to the Atkinson Morley Hospital near Wimbledon, which had become one of the most advanced brain surgery centers in the world, and I did survive!

InvestAfrica Magazine -Where did this take you?

Funmi: I eventually started a rehabilitation process, which I found to be very difficult and strenuous. Eventually I was talking, walking and using my right hand which enabled me to return to family life.

Like many stroke victims, I went on to experience a further serious health issue when I was diagnosed with end stage kidney failure in 2007. Once again, grace of God was shining

upon me as I managed to have a successful transplant in 2011 and used my past experiences to recover, continuing to live as full a life as possible and to bring Clip Knix to market for the benefit of those, who like me, live with limited mobility.

It was then that i began to formulate an idea that could fill a gaping hole in the market, which would eventually become a business. From this seed of an idea, Clip Knix was eventually launched as a product in 2018 and I am proud to be able to assist others who are also unable to bend or stretch when dressing.

InvestAfrica Magazine– What propelled you into this?

Funmi- I observed the difficulties people with limited mobility experienced when dressing and I knew I could create a solution to make their lives easier. With determination and a drive to help, research began.

Providing the solutions to daily problems, I designed, tested, and tested again a solution that came in the form of clip-on underwear. Underwear that can transform the lives of millions. As the first-ever supplier of this form of fashion item (front fastening underwear) globally, this adaptive design is certainly unique. Helping to support independence and making everyday jobs as easy as they should be. This underwear is revolutionary in the market.

Clip-Knix makes attractive, patented, award-winning front-fastening underwear that can be put on easily without the need to bend or stretch or balance on one leg. Clip-Knix underwear reduces the risk of injury and allows wearers to be independent. Manufactured with soft, aesthetically pleasing stretch fabric for a perfect fit and ultimate comfort, simply place Clip-Knix in position and clip! Or button.



The range is a triumph which will revolutionize the lives of many people by , Offering stylish underwear that is easy to use , Preserving independence , Maintaining dignity , Reducing the risk of injury. This product is designed for making living simple.

InvestAfrica Magazine: How do you describe the Product?

Funmi: This practical and stylish high-quality underwear range is not only durable but offers a truly ergonomic solution for those who don't have the physical ability to bend or stretch to put on their underwear - just clip in place. In collaboration with Innovate Product Design based in Salisbury, Clip-Knix focused on designing and manufacturing a practical yet fashionable underwear solution for women that negated the need to bend or stretch when dressing. Also ideal for pregnant women, campers, and travellers who may find themselves in closed or confined spaces, aeroplane toilets, people recovering from surgery.

InvestAfrica Magazine: Are there Opportunities for this product in the market?

Funmi: Records show that 18% of the population England and Wales has disability in 2011 Office of National Statistics. The same Office of National statistics says there is nearly 1 in 5 people in England and Wales reported that some form of disability affects their daily activities. (ONS 13/05/2015) . It would have increased now due to good medical care and people are living longer. On 31/01/2020, it was reported by the ONS that a total of 11 million female where over 60 that lived in England and Wales. 1 in 8 in the world and elderly population is growing.

In 2019/20, the charity Scope reported that there are 14.1m in the UK living with a disability, 1 in 4 and 1.3 billion people worldwide, making the availability and range of suitable fashion that supports those with limited mobility vital. Supporting this movement towards more adaptive designs in fashion, supporting people's independence, and giving people back their dignity is precisely what I set out to do when I developed Clip-Knix.

InvestAfrica Magazine : What are the Challenges?

Funmi - A big problem is funding, the banks are not willing to be patient with a new start-up. As it is a new product and a new brand, sales are just picking up. Sales will have to improve drastically or I find someone to invest in the company.

Then there came Covid as we were locking down, it was the last order out of Shanghai. There so much uncertainty in the country. After Covid was suppressed through vaccination, the next challenge the business is facing is the cost of living crisis. My passion to help others kept me going. Clip-knix is currently on 10 Amazon marketplaces, eBay, Etsy, Faire and Ankostore. It is trading in Australia through Recovwear and in America.

InvestAfrica Magazine : What does the Future hold?

Funmi: Our new range is going to be magnets with the existing fasteners. We are adding period pants and incontinence pants that is magnetic making it even simpler for the wearer.

I will advise new entrepreneurs that a strong passion for the service or product will be needed to carry them through the tough days. Believe in what you do, celebrate yourself, and let others celebrate you, that would give you confidence that you are on the right path.

InvestAfrica Magazine: Tell us about your Company?

Funmi: Clip-Knix works with manufacturers in 2 continents that has experience of producing very good quality lingerie. The designs and the trademark are registered in the UK.. Company Registration: 11573533. It has been patented and worn corporate wire award for London and the South East, specialist Clothing of 2020/2021. F:entrepreneur #also 2023, Smallbizz 100 2022 and finalist Sheinspires.

InvestAfrica Magazine: Tell us about yourself?

Funmi: I have a BSc in Economics from University of Ilorin and an MSc in Analysis, Management of Information Systems (ADMIS) from London School of Economics and Political Science. I gained Prince2 practitioner in 2005 re-registered in 2012 and worked in the Civil Service for 10 years. I gained vast experience in administration of wills, executive customer relationships and project management. I am a trustee for Royal free hospital kidney patient association, an advisor for billion - strong and a member of meaningful business. I have had the opportunity of working in Africa, Europe and Asia. I am British born of Nigerian Heritage.