

NGF TOUR OF BENUE STATE

Wednesday 15th – Saturday 18th July, 2009

Brief History

Benue State, with a population of 5, 181,642 million people, according to 2005 estimate, was formed in 1976 from the former Benue – Plateau State. The state, which derived its name from the popular River Benue, ^{is} ~~was~~ mainly agrarian, rich in agricultural crops like potatoes, beniseed, cassava, soya bean, yams, flax and guinea corn.

There are twenty-three ⁽²³⁾ local government areas, ~~as~~ Benue State ~~which~~ has a diverse ethnic group which includes Tiv, Idoma, Igede, Etulo and Abakwa. Rt. Honourable Gabriel Suswam, a Peoples Democratic Party member, is the governor of the state; ^{The} ~~which~~ ^{is} ~~has~~ its seat of government in Makurdi, the State capital.

The Arrival

The team of researchers, journalists and some staff of NGF arrived Makurdi on the night of Wednesday, 15th of July, 2009 to begin a four-day visit to Benue state. Upon the commencement of projects inspection executed by Suswam-led administration, the secretary to the State Government, Dr. Audu Achigili briefly informed the team from NGF, led by its Director General, Mr. A. B. Okauru, of the state government appreciation of the concern of NGF secretariat for the development of states in Nigeria.

SSG told the team of the readiness of the state to take the team on inspection of projects on-going and completed by the administration of His Excellency, Rt. Hon. Gabriel Suswam since his assumption in office in May 29, 2007. The SSG

charged the team to freely criticize shortcomings identified and give advice and suggestion on improvement where necessary.

Thereafter, the SSG led an entourage of some officials of the state and the team from NGF secretariat to inspect the projects of the state government. The tour however, ended with a courtesy visit to His Excellency, Rt. Hon. Gabriel Suswam, the governor of Benue State who appraised the mission of NGF and concluded that governors in Nigeria needed to be rebranded for effective governance.

Infrastructural Development

◆ Housing

The administration of Rt. Hon. Gabriel Suswam is committed to provision of decent accommodation for the state public officials and the civil servants. In fulfillment of this objective, the government is about to complete a 500-units Aper Aku Housing Estate for civil servants. A new lodge for the state governor which comprises a 700-capacity Banquet Hall, six self-contained guest rooms and living quarters for domestic staff is on-going at a contract sum of N1.4bn.

Also in addition to reconstructing the Benue Governors Office complex Makurdi which comprises, the office of the Governor and that of the first Lady three different conference halls, a 300-capacity banquet hall and many other offices at N327m, Suswam administration also renovates the cabinet office which accommodates the SSG office, the Vice-President Lodge and the buildings for public officers within the commissioner village.

◆ Roads

Since assumption in office in May 29, 2007, Suswam administration has constructed over 33.34km well- asphalted township roads in Makurdi, the state capital, the project which the President, Alhaji Umar Yar'adua has commissioned

in November 2007. The roads within Makurdi are constructed with double coat surface dressing with asphalt overlay, many are of dual capacity, all completed with solar-powered street lighting system and concrete walkway with drainage facilities on both sides.

His Excellency, Rt. Honourable Gabriel Suswam is equally pursuing a noble agenda of constructing virgin roads to open up the rural areas. Presently, many kilometres of such roads have been constructed. These include Otukpo-Utonkon-Agila Road, Eke-Elengbencho-Ugbokolo-Otukpa-Oroka Orokam-Okpoga-Uton-kon (65km), Ugbokpo-Oshigbulu Oweto (47km) Ge-Ikyobo-Agbeede-Amua-Ashagba, Atser-Korinya, Vandeikya-Kotiyough-Adikpo, Adikpo-Ikyogen-Jato Aka (65km), Anyiin-Ugba-Amaafu-Abaji (7.36km), Zaki Biam-Afia-Gbebi, Annune-Jerboagundu, Daudu-Gbajimba. Some of these inter town roads have been completed while many others are at different stages of completion.

◆ **Water**

Fully aware of the acute shortage of potable water in the three senatorial zones of Benue State, Suswam administration designs strategies to reduce the hardship connected to sourcing clean and safe drinkable water by Benue people in Makurdi, Otukpo, Katsina-Ala and their environs. Suswam administration begins the construction and rehabilitation of new and existing water works within the state.

The government initiates the rehabilitation of Old Makurdi Water Treatment Plant, a rehabilitation which government claims is the first since 1975 when the facility has been constructed. The turn around maintenance of Makurdi

Water Works generates 18,000 cm³ of water at present. Similar maintenance projects are carried out on old water facility at Otobi-Otukpo and Katsina-Ala.

However, to effectively tackle the problem of water in Benue for at least thirty years from now, the government has started constructing three mega water projects in Makurdi, Otobi-Otukpo and Katsina-Ala. At the completion of these projects, 100,000 cm³/day of water would be generated for Makurdi and its environs while the projects at Otobi-Otukp and Katsina-Ala are expected to generate for distribution 15,000cm³/day of water respectively to their environs. The projects in Makurdi, Otobi-Otukpo and Katsina-Ala would cost N4.9bn, N2.6bn and N1.5bn respectively.

◆ **Electricity**

Electricity has been identified as core to industrialization of any community. Rt. Hon Gabriel Suswam, the governor of Benue State is committed to providing electricity for pleasure and industrialization of the rural communities. Since inception of his administration, Benue State government has connected Agan, Tomahar/Angough, Terwase/Agbadu, Abuku, Ogodumu, Ushongo, Mchia/Wende, Akpagber, Yander and one hundred and fifteen (115) other villages and small towns to the PHCN national grid.

Economic Development

◆ **Industrialization**

Rt. Hon Gabriel Suswam administration is frantically making efforts to resuscitate many of the state-owned industries which have become moribund due to inefficient management. Benue State Government is adopting Private

Public Partnership strategy to revitalize the Ultra-Modern International Market, Makurdi, Taraku Mills Ltd, Mbatiar Cement; Agro Millers, Igumale Cement, Benfruit (Nig) Ltd, Otukpo Burnt Bricks, Fruit Juice Factory, Gboko, Coal Powered Plant, Owukpa and Benue Tomato/Mango Processing Plant at Annune. To effectively turn around these industries for economic development of Benue State, government has opened discussions with foreign investors from South Africa, China, United States of America and South Africa, many of them have indicated interest to partner Benue State in its economic drive.

◆ **Tourism**

As part of the effort to put Benue on a sound economic footing, Suswam administration has embarked on infrastructural developments to provide the leverage for tourism potentials development of the state. To derive maximum benefits from this area, the government has proposed to reactivate Ikyogen Cattle Ranch, Ikwe Wild Life Park, Makurdi Zoological Garden, Makurdi Golf Course, Makurdi International Hotel and Benue Hotel. Benue State government is determined to make hotels accommodation in Benue attractive to tourists to Obudu Cattle Ranch in Cross-River State as the ranch is said to be closer to Makurdi than it is to Calabar.

◆ **Agriculture**

The vast arable land in every part of Benue State has given Benue State a comparative advantage over and above other states in agriculture. Farming activities in produce such as orange, Mango and tomato usually result in excess yield which make waste inevitable. Government has entered into discussion with foreign investors to maximally generate revenue from the excess availability of fruits in the state.

To further encourage its citizens in agriculture, the state government recently orders for 100 units of tractors of which thirty have been delivered and forty-four existing tractors are rehabilitated. These are to enhance efficient mechanized agricultural practice.

Fertilizer, farm yield boosting chemical, has been procured in large quantity by the administration of Rt. Hon. Gabriel Suswam to improve the soil nutrients for better yield for the farmers. To sustain better crop yield, government in Benue state has complemented farmers' effort to repel crop diseases by purchasing five thousand Knapp Sack Sprayers for the control of weeds and pests. These are sold to the farmers at subsidized rate.

Human Resource Development and Empowerment

◆ Education

Education, the bedrock of development, has witnessed a relay of neglect from government to government thus resulting in massive infrastructure collapse at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. However, Rt. Hon. Gabriel Suswam, since assumption in office on the 29th of May, 2009, has embarked on programmes to turn around the dwindling fortune of education sector in Benue State. According to the submission of the Ministry of Education, the primary and secondary education has received considerable attention of the state administration. Massive construction and renovation of classroom blocks are carried out, purchase of classroom furniture and teaching aids are also implemented.

As evidence of Suswam's administration commitment to rescue schools from their present infrastructural decay, the team visited the College of Advance

and Professional Studies, Makurdi where the government recently completed and commissioned new hostels and administrative blocks.

Also, the team is taken to see the comprehensive renovation Suswam's administration has done at Special Science Senior Secondary School, North Bank, Makurdi. The entire buildings in the school premises are renovated and hostels accommodation are provided to ensure students are not more than four living in one room.

So far, Benue State government has spent a total sum of N486million on renovation of thirty-six government secondary schools and provision of computer sets for secondary schools in the state.

◆ **Health**

With only twenty-two medical doctors to service sixteen general hospitals and many other comprehensive and public health centres in Benue State, health care delivery to the people of the state is surely swimming in troubled water. However, all hope is not lost to rescue that situation.

Dr. Achigili Audu, the Secretary to the State Government, informed the team from NGF at the General Hospital, Adikpo that the government has approved the employment of 42 medical doctors in addition to the existing twenty-two to strengthen the manpower base of hospitals in Benue State. Also, as part of the incentives to attract medical doctors to the service of Benue State, government has also increased the salary and other allowances of medical doctors in addition to providing decent accommodation for them in their places of duty. This commitment is noticed in the on-going renovation of medical doctor residence at the General Hospital, Adikpo.

The sorry state of health care delivery in Benue State is also observed at a Comprehensive Health Care Centre at Otukpa. There, renovation work is

effected on the buildings but the hospital lacks vehicles or an ambulance to convey patients on emergency to specialists hospitals for expert attention.

It is however gratifying to see efforts towards purchases of drugs as well as other hospital equipment and medical supplies to hospitals in Benue State. The desire of the government to provide tertiary health care delivery and improve other levels of health care system is felt in his contract award to complete Benue State University Teaching Hospital, Makurdi.

◆ **NYSC Orientation Camp**

The administration of Gabriel Suswam has taken giant strides in boosting youth corps members condition in Benue State. The state government has just completed an imposing cluster of residential building to accommodate one thousand five hundred (1,500) youth corps members at Wannune, Tarka LGA. The edifice, which sits on 60,000 square metres of land space, also consists of administrative block, staff quarters, 2000-capacity multi-purpose hall, eating-hall, parade ground and games facility. To ensure constant supply of water and electricity within the camp, the state government sinks eight (8) boreholes with overhead tanks and installs a 350KVA generator to complement PHCN supplies.

The project, which is over sixty (60) percent completed, is already put into use by the latest batch of corps members to Benue State, whose presence in the state would have disrupted the academic programme of Government Secondary School, Gboko, which had been the temporary site for the orientation camp for years. The entire project is put at N359,263,166.05m in addition to N5,000,000.00m for the purchase of five hundred double bunk beds for the State Directorate of the NYSC.

The Secretary to the State Government, Dr. Audu Achigili explained that the state government is determined to make life in camp more comfortable for

the corps members because the state would benefit immensely from the manpower potentials of the many medical, law, engineering, education and other categories of polytechnics and universities graduates who have been posted to serve in Benue State.

◆ **Poverty Alleviation**

The administration of Gabriel Suswam has found in transportation business measures to arrest the problem of incessant accident on motor-cycles, exposure to disguised armed-robbers and or kidnappers and biting effect of poverty by providing through public private partnership over 1000-unit of taxi cabs and buses to ease the transportation difficulties of the people particularly at night when there would be no motor-cycles after the 8.00pm ban. Those taxi cabs and buses are allocated to the unemployed youths as part of poverty alleviation programme of Benue State government.

Administration and Sustainability

◆ **The Legislature**

The legislature, a very important arm of government, saddles with responsibility of making laws for good governance and acting as veritable checks on excesses of the executive arm of government, has also been enjoying the goodwill of Suswam's administration in the area of infrastructural development. Benue State government has recently provided the Benue State House of Assembly with a 350KVA generator to provide electricity whenever PHCN fails. The government has also constructed a public gallery in the legislative chambers, construct elevation for the seats of the honourable members and has also equipped the legislative committee offices with necessary equipment. The

honourable members have also been provided with vehicles to facilitate their easy movements in and around Benue State.

No doubt, the Benue State government is enjoying harmonious relationship with the legislative arm of the State government. During the interactive session between the state public officers and the team from NGF Secretariat, the Deputy Speaker, Benue State House of Assembly, Honourable Edor Ogbole Williams was on hand to represent the Speaker, Hon. Terseer Tsumba.

◆ **The Judiciary**

To enhance effective dispensation of justice for peace in Benue State, the government has renovated the court rooms in the High Court complex, Makurdi and other courts across the state. The government has, in addition to the renovation of the court complexes, purchased vehicles for all the high court judges, magistrates and key officials of the Judiciary.

◆ **Traditional Administration**

The Suswam-led administration is not unmindful of the necessary cooperation of the traditional rulers in the state to the success of his administration in Benue State. Therefore, the traditional rulers, the custodians of the culture of the people, has benefited from the goodwill of Benue State government.

Particularly, Benue State government has renovated the palaces of Tor Tiv in Gboko and that of Och' Idoma in Otukpo. In addition, the government has purchased some Toyota Prado jeeps for the traditional rulers.

Local Government Administration

◆ Environmental Protection

Rt. Hon. Gabriel Suswam is doing well in solving problems related to the environment. Major streets in Makurdi are clean and environmental friendly. Government has reached this level of achievements in environmental issues through provision of well-tarred roads, walkways and street lighting, drainage system, refuse collection and disposal facilities have been provided.

To sustain this achievement, Benue state government has constructed over 200 flood and erosion control drainages at Ushongo, Aliade, Joe Akaahan, Balewa Crescent and in many other parts of Makurdi. The government has purchased for the effective evacuation of refuse, over twenty-seven (27) tractor-like vehicle for refuse evacuation and six (6) self-loading refuse vehicles.

Although, the team from NGF observes a low level of compliance in some parts of Makurdi where gross indiscriminate dumping of refuse are carried out by the people in those areas. However, the Commissioner for Water Resources and Environment, Mr. John Ngbede assures the team of enforcement of total compliance by the people to the new arrangement of refuse disposal through the Benue State Environmental Sanitation Authority.

◆ Due Process and Public Procurement Bills

The due process and public procurement bills, as explained by Dr. Audu Achigili, are already prepared and would be sent to the State House of Assembly very soon.

◆ Budget Process

The Secretary to the State Government Dr. Audu Achigili, explained that usually the state government organizes retreats for commissioners in the state to

deliberate and make inputs into the budget planning. Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and other civil societies are not left out of that process of budget planning which afterwards is sent to the budget planning office for debate. SSG further explains that the state usually conducts midterm review of its budget to assess level of implementation as spending of public money in the state is done according to the provision of the budget.

◆ **Youth Empowerment**

Benue State government, led by Rt. Hon. Gabriel Suswam, has at its heart the development of the youth. Hence, government has made it mandatory for industries in the state to compulsorily employ indigenes of the state in their services. Government has also encouraged youth development through sports and issuance of agricultural loans to them.

The government, in addition, has partnered Bank of Industry to provide loan directed to empowering the youth. That partnership is also complemented through the activities of the Ministry for Rural Development which ensures access of youth to funds through cooperative societies.

◆ **Electoral Process**

The Secretary to the State Government, Dr. Audu Achigili, informs that Benue State has no electoral reform programme in place yet. However, Benue State has conducted hitch-free elections into all the twenty-three local government councils of the State. The government as part of the measure to reduce tension during elections is always in contact and do meet regularly with other political parties in the state to discuss and carry them along in the development programmes of the state.

◆ **Internally Generated Revenue**

Benue State has been progressing in its Internally Generated Revenue. The state generated N100 million from May 2007 but generated N3bn in 2008. The state target for 2009 is N5bn but for the global economic meltdown.

However, to improve on the IGR profile of Benue State, the State government has commenced a review of all obsolete chargeable rates accruable to the state government. SSG notes that the rural areas of the State are being developed to encouraged tax payment. Also, landlords within urban areas are willing to pay taxes on their property, hence; government has embarked on massive infrastructural development of the urban areas by providing roads, water and other amenities for the comfort of the people.

To fully chore up the IGR base of the state, the government of Benue State is determined to reactivate all the moribund industries in the state and encouraged many others to be established in addition to what the state would get in revenue from agriculture and tourism.

◆ **Local Government Administration**

Benue State government has recently amended the local government law which the state house of assembly passed into law in January, 2008. The amendment is to enable the state and the LGAs operate a joint account fund of which the state Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs prescribes funds percentage between the state and LGAs. In reality, SSG explain, that the government of Benue State has always come to the aid of local government which has inadequate fund to meet their financial need.

NGF TOUR OF PLATEAU STATE

Saturday 18th – Wednesday 22nd, July, 2009

Brief History:

Plateau state which was formed out of Benue-Plateau in 1976 is the twelfth largest state in Nigeria. It is roughly located in the centre of the country, in the Middle Belt zone. The State capital is Jos. Plateau State is made up of seventeen local government areas and covers total land areas of about 31,000 km². The state has a population of 3.553,440 million people according to 2005 estimate. The current governor of the state is His Excellency, Da Jonah David Jang, a member of the peoples Democratic Party.

Arrival in Jos, the capital of Plateau State

The team of researchers, journalists and some staff of NGF secretariat, led by the Director General, Mr. A. B. Okauru, on peer-review mission arrived Jos, the capital of Plateau State on the evening of Saturday, 13th July, 2009 to begin a five-day tour of the state.

Commencement of Projects Inspection

A team comprising of Commissioners, Permanent Secretaries and Directors in the relevant ministries to the projects slated for inspection arrive early on Sunday morning to take the NGF team around the projects executed by the administration of His Excellency, Jonah David Jang since he came into office on the 29th of May, 2007.

On assuming office as the governor of Plateau State on 2007, Jonah David Jang set out on a ten-point agenda of:

- ❖ Sustainable peace and security
- ❖ Governance and Administrative Reforms

- ❖ Education and human resource development
- ❖ Taxes and Finances
- ❖ Agriculture, water resources and rural development
- ❖ Health
- ❖ Women, youth and social development
- ❖ Tourism
- ❖ Urban governance and,
- ❖ Ethical Orientation

Upon setting these agenda of work in development and progress, Plateau state is set to witness a landmark commitment to overall development, unprecedented in the history of the state.

Human Resource Development and Empowerment

◆ Education

Education, a component of the third agenda of Jonah David Jang administration in Plateau State, is the bedrock of development in every society and His Excellency, Jonah David Jang, is determined to give every attention deserving to that sector.

Of utmost concern to the generality of the people is the suspension of academic activities at Plateau State University, Bokokos, Plateau State. His Excellency, Jonah David Jang explains that the university is lacking in necessary basic infrastructural for it to compare and compete with well-established institutions around. His Excellency, Jonah David Jang is sure cut out for quality and adequate provision for a university and that he so much desire to put in place for the university to effectively take-off. He cited the example of Katsina State University of which infrastructural facilities have been built with necessary

equipment in place before that university admits its first set of students. That much His Excellency promises to do for Plateau State University, a development for which he has appointed a governing council to steer the university into a fantastic state of facilities.

As part of Jang's administration to move Plateau State ahead through education, the governor has approved a model technical college at Bukuru, Jos and three model science secondary schools, each in the three senatorial districts of the state.

Plateau State government under Jonah David Jang has begun a progressive renovation of primary and secondary schools in the state. The governor informs that his administration would carry out total renovation of ten (10) primary schools in each of the seventeen local governments and also renovates five secondary schools in each of the three senatorial districts of the state.

Efforts of Jang-administration to improve education are already felt at College of Agriculture, Garkawa, Plateau State Polytechnic (Jos Campus) and at the College of Education, Gindiri where renovation works have been completed. At present, massive construction, renovations, provision of facilities, recruitment of qualified teachers and many more projects towards improving the quality of education in the state are on-going.

The governor, Jonah David Jang, has observed the level of moral decadence and flagrant disrespect for core values of hard-work, honesty, integrity and traditions. His determination to reverse this ugly situation is the core of the tenth agenda. To bring this all important agenda to reality, His Excellency is targeting the young pupils in primary schools and their senior counterparts in secondary schools to manifest his intention.

The governor says civic education would be reintroduced into the school curriculum to teach the young ones the ethical values in the society along the moral instructions from the Christian and Islamic knowledge teachings.

◆ **Health**

Health care delivery is the sixth agenda of Jang-administration in Plateau State. The deplorable state of health care infrastructures and personnel in the state are set for reversal to improve the quality of health service in various health institutions in the state.

His Excellency, Jonah David Jang says he has plans to renovate and develop cottage hospitals and upgrade three other hospitals to a regional health services centres which would act as major referral centre for other hospitals (cottage and comprehensive health centres) around them.

Earlier, during the tour of facilities in the state, the state Commissioner for Health, Prof. Barnabas Mandong, gives a comprehensive plan of the government to improve health care delivery in Plateau State. He informs of the partnership agreement with a Garman firm to build a N10bn major specialist hospital between Barkin Ladi and the airport at Heipang. He talks about the many academic intervention partnership with the University of Jos Teaching Hospital to offer different level of courses to the state medical personnel towards updating their skills in medical practice.

As part of the development on-going in the health sector, the team inspects the renovation and upgrading of facilities at the school of Nursing and Midwifery, Vom. At the school, the Plateau State government recently renovates the hostel accommodation within the premises, renovates the administrative block, purchase vehicles, sink boreholes, built blocks of classrooms, a multi-purpose hall and a library stocked with necessary textbooks and furniture. Government also provides other medical equipment and computer sets to

improve the ICT capacity of the students in both the schools of nursing and midwifery. In all government has committed N118m to do all of the earlier-stated for the schools of Nursing and Midwifery, Vom, Plateau State.

◆ **Skill Acquisition**

As a veritable tool towards reducing the poverty level of the less privilege and disabled citizens in Plateau State, the state government has introduced several poverty alleviation schemes which targets empowering every kind of disadvantaged people like people living with HIV, disabled persons and orphans.

To achieve this goal, government has instituted training in skill acquisition in information technology, woodwork, metal, hairdressing. These skill acquisition training centres are to be replicated in the three senatorial zones of the state.

Infrastructural Development

◆ **Roads**

With the construction of the first flyover in Jos in addition to dualisation and rehabilitation of other roads in Jos metropolis, all at N9bn; the construction of road with a bridge across a breath-taking depth of Jimbam River to link Chip Chiefdom at N253m and another road through rocky terrain to link Pankshin with Langkan at N613m, Governor Jonah David Jang is truly touching the lives of people who never felt the presence of government in their locality.

The governor, since 2007, has constructed over 80.5km of local government roads. The Jang-administration desire to improve the living standard of the people across the state culminates in the decision of the

government to construct at least 6kilometers of internal roads in each of the seventeen local governments in the state. Several of this project in Bassa (6km) JosNorth (6km) Jos South, (8km) Barkin Ladi (6km) Jos East, (6km) Bokkos, (6km) Mangu, (6km) Pankshin (6km) Kanam (6km) Wase (6km), Langtang North (7km) and Shendam (8km) Local Government Areas have reached different levels of completion.

The government of Plateau State under Governor David Jang has also embarked on the construction of inter-local government roads. These include Mangu-Gindiri-Lere (42.7km) which is handled by Tilley Gyado Construction.

◆ **Water**

Recognizing the health risk in the consumption of unhygienic water and the need to make available for the people, on daily basis, clean and safe potable water, the Jang-administration has taken some bold steps to boost water supply in the state.

Jang administration has initiated a turn around maintenance of the Yakubu Gowon Dana Treatment Plant at the cost of N17, 088,200.00 to improve supply of water to Jos.Bukuru metropolis.

This government has equally purchased and installed 20kw raw water flyte pump to boost the capacity at Yelwa Water Treatment Plant. Jang-administration, in addition to purchasing water treatment chemicals at the cost of N3m, has purchased pipes for water extension to Longwa and Gorandok communities at the cost of N13.774, 000.00.

◆ **Housing**

The housing programme of Jang – administration at present is to provide decent accommodation for the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the

State Deputy Governor and other very important Personalities on visit to the state.

The Presidential Lodge is being renovated to provide a befitting accommodation to the president whenever he visits Plateau State. The complex, which is handled by Eagle Construction Company, at a cost of N450m, comprises of a banquet hall, office space for the President, other office rooms for his essential service staff, games and relaxation centre which include a squash court, a lawn tennis court and a swimming pool with a treatment plant.

To guarantee constant supply of water and electricity to the complex, the government of Plateau State provides a 50,000 litres overhead water tank and a 350KVA generator.

Similarly, the administration of Governor Jonah David Jang has completed a befitting residence for the state Deputy Governor. The Deputy Governor residence, which include a block for guests and office complex for the staff cost a sum of N178m. The complex, sitting on a vast rocky terrain, is constructed through direct labour by the Ministry of Works.

The state government, under Governor Jonah David Jang is determined to reduce the cost of accommodating guests of the state government in hotels. The government, therefore, has refurbished sixteen (16) units of special Guest Houses within the Government House at Rayfield, Jos. Each of the sixteen guest houses has four bedrooms, two sitting rooms fitted and furnished with exotic, state of the art facilities.

Each of the guest houses in named after the past governors of the state. The sixteenth of the guest houses, to be named after Governor Jonah Jang is under construction. The cost of the entire project including the building and finishing of the sixteenth guest house is put at N492m.

Economic Development

◆ Agriculture

In support of the President Umar Yar'adua desire to transform the nation, Nigeria, from a consuming country to a producing nation thus becoming one of the twenty best economies by the year 2020, the fifth Agenda of Governor Jonah David Jang is set to achieve that target. The government of Plateau State desire to create a self-sustaining agricultural growth to provide food for the population and raw produce for agro-allied based industries is fully on course.

Plateau State is one of the leading producers of agricultural produce in Nigeria. The State has huge prospects of extensive agricultural sector from the enormous supportive programmes and provisions being implemented towards enhancing food security.

The government has partnered with an Israeli firm to provide training services to farmers in the state. At the Agricultural Services and Training Centre (STC) Kassa and Vom the Commissioner for Agriculture and Natural Resources Mr. Na'Allah Mutbam conceptualizes the ASTC programmes.

Apart from training in modern mechanized farming for which the government has already provided over twenty tractors and farm implements with more coming from Israel, the centre will provide cold room storage facilities; establish a small dairy factory to enhance training in mechanized milking of fattened cows.

Already the ASTC has taken off with vast demonstration farm field where farmers both peasant and commercial are taught practical techniques of improving their farm yield. Already, the facility had trained about two hundred

farmers to whom government has given five bags each of NPK fertilizer to replicate their learning.

The ASTC is planned to be replicated in each of the senatorial zone of the state. For the entire massive facilities provided at both Kassa and Vom garden of ASTC, Plateau State is spending N8.7bn while the Israel partner contributes N1.9bn.

The administration of Governor Jonah David Jang efforts to improve agricultural sector span beyond training and cropping farming. The government is exploring the possibility of generating income and providing more employment in fish farming.

The attempt to achieve this has been set in motion with the rehabilitation plan of Panyam Fish Farm in Panyam, Mangu Local Government Area. The fish farm, which was established in 1952 and has since been abandoned, has forty-two ponds of various sizes (with production capacity of 200 tonnes of fish a day).

The fish farm built on 120 hectares of land is claimed to be one of the largest in West Africa. Government plans to revive the farm has begun with a 6km road project to provide access road to the farm. The road project is awarded to AG Vision Nig. Ltd at contract sum of N128m.

Plans are in the pipeline to convert all of the 4,112 abandoned mining ponds across the state to fish ponds for the economic gain of the people other than the danger those ponds pose at present.

◆ **Tourism**

Plateau state is richly endowed with huge tourism potentials for which the government is making efforts to reposition. The Jang administration notes that tourism with significant federal government control does come with

challenges in areas of visa procurement, airport service and prohibitive air fares and security within the country.

However, Jang-administration had sent a team to Namibia to understudy that country tourism practice in order to fully tap into the potentials available in tourism sector.

◆ **Mineral Resources**

The mining of tin in the Jos Plateau beginning from 1902 has sustained Nigeria economy over before the discovered of oil. The governor, His Excellency Jonah David Jang, however, said with the dwindling fortune of tine mining in Plateau state notwithstanding, a survey of the state's natural and mineral resources has discovered fifty-seven (57) other minerals in commercial quantity. These include barites, Kaolin, Zircon, Monazite, Limestone, Sphialerite, Quartz, Galena, Glass, Sand and Clay.

The commercial value of Kaolin for example as explained by the governor is available in chalk making and is a very good material for making POP ceiling.

◆ **Industrialization and Commence**

The government of Governor Jonah David Jang is determined to return Plateau State to similar level of industrialization witnessed between 1959 and 1982. The government is tapping into the state abundant agriculture and mineral resources to transform the state economy. Agro-allied industries that could use the agricultural resources of the state profitably in food processing are encouraged come to Plateau State. Hence, the State is providing access roads to reach every part of the state.

Similar possibility to industrialization is found in local raw materials such as clay, ceramic, glass, steel and metal sheets. All of these could be harnessed to support building materials industries.

To improve the commercial base of the local farmers who have always been victims of poor bargaining in the hands of middlemen in the agricultural marketing sector, the government of Jonah David Jang has initiated the formation of Micro Finance Cooperative Society in each local government to help the farmers access fund. Tractor hiring services cooperative society has also been formed in each of the local governments to ease the hardship of the farmers in cultivating land for farming.

◆ **Taxes and Finance – IGR**

Jang administration had completed plan to shore up the internally generated revenue based of the state in various ways. First, the state has completed Plateaus Geographic Information System which mandates a revalidation of land ownership by individuals in the state.

Second, the tax administration of the state is to be reviewed to ensure efficient machinery for revenue. To complement this review, the governor said he would be visiting the governor of Lagos State to learn his strategies in tax administration.

The two measures above are hope to increase the IGR of the state and for its success, Jang-administration has put before the state House of Assembly an amendment bill to give his reforms legality.

◆ **Peace and Security**

Government Jonah David Jang is desirous of returning Jos and the entire Plateau State to its once peaceful state of hospitality and tourism. The November

2008 ethno-religious crisis has greatly undermine the first agenda of the governor to sustain peace and security.

At present, the governor says his administration is spending so much to maintain peace, security, law and order in Plateau State. He is particularly bitter that such money, which his administration could have spent to add values to people-oriented projects, is being invested to provide security in the state.

◆ **Environment**

The administration Governor Jonah David Jang is no doubt pursuing a rigorous enforcement of sanitation rules. Jos metropolis and many other local government areas are observed to be very clean.

Jos, the capital city, has been made more environment friendly through an improved drainage system, refuse collection and disposal facilities and the green grass initiatives of the government. Every place within Jos bears eloquent testimony to the efficiency of the Ministry of Housing and Environment for which the government has employed two thousand sweepers and fifteen trucks for the evacuation of wastes within Jos metropolis.

◆ **Civil Service Capacity Building**

One of the high point of Governor Jonah David Jang is the recurring faces of Civil Servants in most of the projects executed by his administration. The design and construction work of the Deputy Governor Lodge is one hundred percent done by the engineers of the Ministry of Works.

NGF TOUR OF KWARA STATE

SUNDAY, 26TH – WEDNESDAY, 29TH JULY, 2009

Brief History

Kwara State with a population of 2,591,555 according to 2005 estimate was created on 27 May 1967 by the Federal Military Government of General Yakubu Gowon. Its capital is Ilorin and its governor is Dr. Abubakar Bukola Saraki, a member of the Peoples Democratic Party.

Kwara State is populated with people of diverse ethnic groups of Nupe, Fulani, Yoruba and Bariba. At present, the state has sixteen local government areas.

Arrival in Kwara State

The team of journalists, researchers and some NGF Secretariat staff arrived Ilorin on Sunday, the 26th of July, to begin a four-day inspection of projects executed by the administration of His Excellency, Dr. Bukola Saraki.

The team, however, could not immediately set out on its mission in Kwara State, owing to the one-day working visit of His Excellency, the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Alhaji Umar Musa Yar'Adua to Ilorin the capital of Kwara State on Monday, 27th July, 2009.

Thereafter, the following day was a very busy day as the team was taken round to see some key and very important projects embarked upon by Saraki administration, most important of which are his initiatives at the Shonga

Agriculture project and the Ganmo Electrification project, a project which the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, His Excellency, Alhaji Umar Musa Yar'Adua had commissioned the previous day. Those inspectors were concluded with an interactive session with the executive members of Kwara State government, the meeting was presided by His Excellency, Dr. Abubakar Bukola Saraki, the governor of Kwara State and the Chairman, Nigeria Governor's Forum.

For the purpose of this report, the activities of the government of Kwara State shall be highlighted under four key headings of:

- Human Resource Development and empowerment.
- Infrastructural Development.
- Economic Development.
- Administration and Sustainability.

Human Resource Development and Empowerment

◆ *Education*

Formal education has become undeniably the gateway to development. Without literacy, without the right and readily available information about the factors that sustain growth, development becomes stagnated. Hence, the government of Kwara State is not unmindful of quality education, at all levels and particularly at the formative years in the primary schools, as very important to growth of Kwara State.

The "Every Child Counts" project of the government, according to the submission of the government, "... is a bid vision which sets out four key goals designed to form the basis for better delivery of education across the state."

According to the Commissioner of Education Mr. Bolaji Abdullahi, the attention of Kwara State Government to education at present is beamed at

improving the teaching curriculum and the manpower components such that would guarantee the numeracy and literacy deliverables of every child enrolled in a school. To achieve the foregoing, the government is concerned with improving the quality of the teachers in schools in Kwara State and also restructuring the course content of the state's College of education, a core training institution for teachers, to set the basic requirements of the students in primary schools.

Earlier, in the course of inspecting projects executed in the state, the team stops to assess the level of government's commitment to infrastructural development of schools in the state, particularly at the rural areas like Dumagi, where a secondary school, Bata-Kinti Comprehensive High School, is discovered to have only five small classrooms to accommodate three hundred and fifty-four students. More pathetic is the revelation by the Principal of that school, Mr. Alhassan Musa Ndache, that the school lacks teachers in core subjects like English Language and the sciences.

◆ *Health*

The National Health Insurance Scheme programme in Kwara State, at least as observed in operation at the Comprehensive Health Centre, Shonga, by the team is commendable. The scheme being managed under the Hygeria Community Health Plan, has facilitated the registration of over fifty thousand (50,000) persons who are now the beneficiaries of free health care services on a token annual fee of ₦300.

During the interactive session, the Commissioner for Health, Hajia Asiata Ayinke Saka, informs the team of the government commitment to health care delivery in Kwara State. She says the state has been able to record a reduction in

maternal mortality rate owing to improvement in primary health centres provision and service delivery.

The Commissioner for Health also mentions that the state government through the Ministry of Health is adequately partnering with relevant bodies towards quality health-care services. The state has partnered the Dutch government in the implementation of the National Health Insurance Scheme, it has collaborated with MDGs operatives in Abuja for supply of drugs and hospital equipment towards reducing child and maternal mortality. Also, the Ministry of Health has been collaborating effectively with traditional health practitioners.

◆ *Poverty Alleviation Scheme*

The government of Kwara State under the administration of Dr. Abubakar Bukola Saraki has discovered poverty and unemployment as a factor capable of truncating the development plans for the state. The government, according to the Commissioner for Agriculture, has discovered agriculture as the surest avenue for employment generation for the unemployed youths in the state.

To fully realized this objective of alleviating poverty by providing gainful employment in the agricultural sector, the government has established an agricultural training centre at Molete in Ilorin for the training of one hundred youths in practical agriculture after which the youths are assisted to access loan of ₦850,000 each from banks. That loan is to start off the youth in agricultural practice on five hectares of land that is provided each of them in their respective local government areas where they are expected to share the benefits of their training with the local farmers for improved productivity.

Micro Finance Banks in the state are to enable small scale business owners to have easy access to soft loans to boost their business, as part of the poverty

alleviation programme. Microfinance Banks in the state are established, a project in which the government holds 10% equity while 90% equity belongs to private investors of the bank.

Infrastructural Development

◆ Roads

Since inception, Dr. Bukola Saraki administration has constructed over 126 roads in Kwara State. Of the 534km of road projects, the government has completed 384km of state roads and 121km of Federal government roads. Those revelations are according to the submission of Mr. Ayo Samuel, the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Works, during the interactive session.

Some of the on-going road projects that are shown the team from NGF include

1. Murtala Mohammed Way (near Post Office) 500 metres flyover project being handled by Setraco Construction at a cost of ~~N~~2.3bn. The project which started in March 2008 is to last for twenty-four months;
2. Ola-Olu-Offa garage Road is a 2.5km dualisation project awarded to Bullentine Construction Company Limited at the contract sum of N600m. The project started in November 2008 and would be completed in August 2009.
3. Offa Garage – Dangote Road, also a 3.5km dualisation project with two bridges. The construction work is being done by Soject Nigeria Ltd at a contract sum of N1.18bn. The project is expected to be completed in September 2009.

◆ Water

With acute shortage of potable water distribution to the over 2 million people in Kwara State, and to tackle this problem, the government, under Dr. Bukola Saraki, according to the Commissioner for Water and National Resources, Alhaji Abdul-Mumin Katibi, has procured three borehole rig for the purpose of providing borehole water for the people in the rural areas.

The government has also initiated the rehabilitation of ninety-three semi-urban water works. Only eight of that number are said to be functioning when Dr, Bukola Saraki assumed office as governor. Now, His Excellency, Dr. Bukola Saraki has rehabilitated seventy-eight of those water works thus far, remaining fifteen to be completed soonest.

The major turn-around maintenance of water supply in Ilorin is at the Asa Dam which was built in 1979 and has since been denied attention. The dam, which was constructed to supply 12.5 million gallons of water per day, was by the year 2003 only capable of distributing less than 4 million gallons per day thus necessitating the N1.2bn rehabilitation work at the dam which now generates 13.5 million gallons per day.

In addition, the Commissioner for Water and Natural Resources, addressing the team in line with what Mr. Ayo Toyin Ibrahim, Special Assistant Budget and Project Monitoring, has earlier told the team at the dam, says the Federal Government also awarded for construction another treatment plant which generates 12 million gallons of water per day. Now, Asa dam is generating 25.5 million gallons of water per day.

In order to fully utilize the capacity of water being generated and treated at Asa Dam, there arises need to construct another high and low lift pump station at N2.2bn while the reticulation pipes, which have been laid since 1978, are awarded to CGC Construction for replacement at ~~N~~6.5bn. These projects are being financed with the fund from the bond taken by the government, according

to Alhaji Abdul-Mumin Katibi, the Commissioner for Water and Natural Resources.

◆ *Housing*

The government in Kwara State is gradually warming up to provide accommodation for a teeming population of civil servants and private individuals. To realize this, the administration of Dr. Bukola Saraki has been able to complete and sold two hundred and thirty (230) units of houses at Mandate III Housing Estate to the civil servants through the Kwara State Housing Corporation.

◆ *Electricity*

Kwara State government rural and urban electrification programme is commendable and worthy of emulation by other states. As the Commissioner for Energy, Alhaji Zakari Mohammed, informs the team that the state government is implementing a deliberate and systematic provision of electricity in Kwara State. That mandate has resulted in the electrification of 105 rural communities in the phase I of the government rural electrification project. The phase II of the project would witness the electrification of other 425 rural communities. According to the Commissioner, the government of Dr. Bukola Saraki is determined to have electrified all of the rural communities by 2011.

The administration of Dr, Bukola Saraki has completed in February 2009, the installation of a 15MVA Sub-Power Station at Shonga. The 33/11KVA transformer injection station, which cost the government a sum of N1bn, is to boost power supply to the district where the government is piloting the

industrialization of the state through agriculture on the strength and expertise of the white commercial farmers from Zimbabwe, who now operates a syndicate on a 15,000 hectare of land in Shonga.

The most ambitious of Saraki administration determination to guarantee constant electricity supply to the commercial and private consumers of electricity in Ilorin and its environs, is the completion the 330/132/33KVA substation at Ganwo.

The project, which has been commissioned by His Excellency, President Umar Musa Yar'Adua, consists of (i) 2 x 150MVA 330/132KVA transformers (ii) 2 x 60MVA 132/33KVA transformers with 330KVDC transmission line.

The design and execution of the project is done by Matelec S.A.L. (Lebanon) at a cost of ₦4.5billion which includes the evacuation of power to existing transmission lines at the cost of ₦66m, the offshore components of the substation at the cost of ₦3.5bn while the onshore components are completed at the cost of ₦800million.

The power sub-station, which has been on the board for over twenty-six (26) years now, is already yielding positive effect in the industrial sector within Ilorin. The Special Assistant to the Governor Budget and on Project Monitoring. Dr. Toyin Ayo Ibrahim informs the town at the substation at Ganwo that the completion of the substation is saving the industries in Ilorin about ₦2.5bn in cost for diesel.

Economic Development

◆ Agriculture

The most outstanding effort of Kwara State government under Dr, Bukola Saraki towards the economic development of the state is its investment in agriculture.

According to the submission of the Special Assistant to the Governor on Agriculture, who conducted the team around the facilities at the Shnoga Zimbabwe White Farmers Farmlands. A partnership project which the state government jump started through the establishment of Shonga Holding Companies through which the farmers could access loans from the partnering five banks which contributed an equity of ₦200m each.

The project at Shonga is operating on three specialized agricultural areas of cropping, poultry and dairy. The project has thirteen different groups of farmers, each of whom operates on at least 1,000 hectares of land.

Now, the poultry and the dairy sector of the farm project are already into full scale packaging of their products for sale to the public. The poultry farmers are now processing on daily basis 10,000 broilers in their abattoir while the dairy sector is now producing for sale 50,000 litres of milk on daily basis.

The white farmers in the poultry sector, Mr. Hunter Coetzee and Mr. Peter Crouch, who aside from owning their different poultry farm are into partnering with sore other poultry syndicates to establish a feed mill plant, capable of producing 10,000 bags of feed per day, expresses the challenges facing them as poor variety of Soya bean seeds poor, research facility, exorbitant exercise duty at 27% paid on imported machineries, poor quality of fertilizer and the most worrisome is the epileptic supply of electricity by the PHCN. In spite of these challenges they both claim that the government of Kwara State has been very supportance of their activities on the farms.

◆ *Industrialisation*

Kwara State, like many other states in Nigeria, is industrially backward. Apart from the presence of the active Dangote Flour, subsidiary of Dangote

Groups, many other private and government owned industries are performing below expectation or not functioning at all.

However, the administration of Dr. Bukola Saraki has resuscitated the once moribund Kwara Furniture, which now has in its employment over one thousand employees. Similar intervention is being witnessed in the Cashew Processing Company, which has also employed over one thousand people. The government also facilitated into its services, the resuscitation of Jebba Paper Mill which is now owned by some foreigners.

The above revelations are the submissions of Mr. Ademola Banu, the Special Assistant to the Governor on Economic and Planning and the Commissioner for Industry and Solid Minerals, Alhaji Adamu during the interactive session with the team. He says further that Saraki – administration has equally initiated plans to establish a paper converter company and a cement factory. He explains that Kwara State government has already found a partner to invest in the project to complement the ₦160million which Saraki-administration has injected into the project which is expected to take-off in a month's time.

The cement factory, according to him, would produce about one million tones of cement when it becomes fully operational.

Administration and Sustainability

◆ *Internally Generated Revenue*

With the plans of the state Ministry of finance to improve the Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) of Kwara State from its current disappointing state to about N300million monthly, the state government is bent on exploring all fronts to go beyond that target.

At the Ilorin Airport, Mr. Ayo Samuel, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Works, informs that the state government is constructing a new cargo terminal

complex. This project, according to him is to accelerate the revenue generation base of the government from what would be paid to it by cargo operators at the airport.

Similarly, he mentions the construction of a truck plaza for the parking of heavy duty trucks and trailers. The plaza, which would consist of motels, clinic, banks and vehicle service bays, is planned towards revenue generation for the state.

The on-going construction of a 10,000 capacity Metropolitan Square, which started in March 2008 by Stabilini Vinoni Ltd and to be completed by December 2009 at a cost of ₦1.1bn, is also a target for revenue generation from those that would use the square to hold their ceremonies.

◆ *Due Process and Public Procurement Bills.*

Kwara State government is yet to pass the bills.

NGF TOUR OF NIGER STATE

WEDNESDAY, 29TH – FRIDAY, 31ST JULY, 2009

Brief History

Niger State is a northern state and the largest in land mass in Nigeria. The capital city of the state is Minna.

Niger State was formed out of the old North-Western State in 1976. The state has its capital in Minna. Niger State, with other major cities of Bida, Kontagora and Suleja, is the largest state in land mass in Nigeria.

The state, which took its name from the River Niger, is very important to economic development of Nigeria being host to the two major hydroelectric power stations in Kainji and Shiroro dams.

The state, with a population of 4,082,558, according to 2005 estimate, has twenty-five local governments. The state is being governed by Alhaji Aliyu Babangida, a member of the Peoples Democratic Party.

Arrival in Minna, the Capital of Niger State

The team of journalists, researchers and some staff of NGF Secretariat arrived Minna, the capital of Niger State on the late evening of Wednesday, 29th July, 2009.

The team was received at the project site of the Talban 500-Units Housing Estate by the representatives of the Niger State government. After a quick

introduction of both parties, the inspection of projects began with visit that evening to the Talba Housing Estate and the MDGs store, all in Minna.

The itinerary of project inspections as planned by Niger State government for NGF team spread from Wednesday 29th and ended shortly before noon on Friday, 31st July, 2009. Thereafter, the team paid a courtesy visit to His Excellency, Governor Aliyu Babangida at the Government House, Minna.

The progress of the NGF team of Niger State is discussed in four sections of

- ⇒ Human Resource development and Empowerment.
- ⇒ Infrastructural Development.
- ⇒ Economic Development.
- ⇒ Administration and Sustainability.

Human Resource Development and Empowerment

◆ *Education*

The picture of education in Niger State as at 2007 when the administration of Aliyu Babangida came on board was pathetic. The sector was utterly suffering infrastructure collapse, students' performance at all levels was dismal, poor attitude in sending children to school, lack of facilities needed for learning hence, the falling standard of education exemplified by poor results and enrolment in schools.

To arrest this drift, the administration of Governor Aliyu Babangida introduced new incentives, by providing support for students and teachers. Thus, enrolment of pupils in schools began to improve and morale of teachers received a boost.

The administration of Governor Aliyu Babangida began to update the facilities in schools to make learning attractive. As the bedrock of education, primary schools were given immediate attention.

For example, the government has completed plans to establish a model primary school in Minna. The Central Primary School, Minna, has been marked down for that positive turn around.

As a further demonstration of its commitment to providing infrastructure facilities for conducive learning, Aliyu Babangida-administration has embarked on construction of blocks of classrooms for the College of Arts and Islamic Studies, Bida. The school with student population of 1,745 was, according to Mr. Habibu Shehu, the Principal, operating from a temporary site until the intervention of Governor Aliyu Babangida.

Although, the facilities on ground at the permanent site of the school in Bida are still grossly inadequate, the management of the school, whose boarding students are still resident in temporary building donated by Elsu Nupe, believes with exercise of political will to do, the school would witness tremendous development.

Similarly, at the Government Secondary School, Bida, the team from NGF was astonished as the massive rehabilitation of the hostel and classroom blocks still on-going in the school. The Principals of both the Senior and Junior Secondary Schools, Mr. Abdullahi Badegi and Mallam Usman Bada Abu, were on hand to welcome the team to the historical school, that has produced two of Nigeria heads of state and many other outstanding military and civilian public officers.

According to the Principal, Mr. Abdullahi Badegi, the Old Boys Association of the school under the presidency of Colonel Sani Bello (Rtd) had been greatly complementing the efforts of the state government in the school by picking the bills of the on-going renovation of the school buildings.

The team also visited campus of Niger State Polytechnic, Wushishi, where the state government drives to support education at all levels was reflected in the submissions of the Rector, Alhaji Garba Mohammed.

The Polytechnic, which was prior to 1991, a College of Advanced Studies, has witnessed positive intervention of Niger State government in release of fund to support the facilities requirement of its school of Science and Technology.

As a further demonstration of financial support to the Polytechnic, the Rector, Alhaji Garba Mohammed said the government had been progressive in its release of fund to the institution. In 2007, the Polytechnic got ₦19m from the government which increased to ₦60m in 2008. The government of Niger State under the administration of Governor Aliyu Babangida had also been instrumental to the accreditation of the courses being offered by the Polytechnic.

◆ *Health*

The Director General, Millennium Development Goals Programme in Niger State, Alhaji Hassan Nuhu informs the team from NGF of the alarming rate of maternal mortality prior to the coming of the Aliyu Babangida administration.

The intervention survey of the government discovers lack of Public Health Centres and facilities as responsible for the higher rate of mortality. Hence, the government embarked on the renovation of one hundred primary health care centres and the construction of another new one hundred primary health care centres on the rural area.

To ensure effective treatment of health complaints at these primary health care centres, the government has a strenuous quantity of equipment and drugs for distribution to the PHCs. The equipment and drugs are shown to the team at

the Technology Incubation Complex, Minna, where they are housed for safe keeping before onward deliveries to the appropriate PHCs.

Niger State government has spent a total of ~~₦~~300m to purchase medical equipment, ~~₦~~150m to renovate one hundred PHCs and ~~₦~~270m to construct another one hundred PHCs in the rural areas. The funding for the project in fulfillment of the Millennium Development Goals is through the counterpart funding of 2008 conditional grant of MDGs, Abuja. Here, MDGs, Abuja contributes ~~₦~~504m while Niger State government contributes another ~~₦~~504m. The state is yet to access the fund for 2009.

The Director General, MDGs Programmes, Alh. Hassan Nuhu explains a very unique approach of the government towards ensuring the priority needs of communities are what government gives to them. This is achieved through the institution of 5-Man development committee at each ward level. These committees whose members are from the wards, is charged with the responsibility of identifying the priority needs of their wards and recommend some to government for provision. These committees collect equipment and drugs on behalf of their area from the government and dispense appropriately.

To prevent government procured equipment and drugs from being put into wrong use, the government put in place a monitoring regulatory framework, the Project Support Unit, which task is to ensure delivery of government supportive facilities get to the actual communities and end users who need them.

The efforts of Niger State government under Babangida-administration to boost healthcare delivery in conjunction with the local government administrators are commendable. At the Comprehensive Health Care Centre, Zugaru, the government has been able to reinvigorate the moribund health care centre which was built in 1972 by the missionaries.

According to the Chairman, Wushishi Local Government Council, Hon. Alhaji Saidu Abubakar, the government had committed ₦30million to construct quarter for the resident doctor, renovate and rehabilitated the health facility to provide immediate and convenient access to effective medical care at the grassroot.

To provide the necessary medical personnel backup for the health centre, the government collaborated with the Federal Medical Centre which had deployed two of its medical doctors two laboratory technologists and seven nurses in addition to another seven nurses for the services of the health care. One of the doctors, Dr. O.E. Elegbede, Head, community Health, Federal Medical Centre, Bida, was there to confirm the partnership as he told the NGF team that they would fully relocate to render medical services at the hospital the following week.

However, the team discovered as a challenge to timely medical attention the cultural and religious sentiment of the local people to health care. A sick pregnant woman in the hospital was said to have refused treatment until her husband would arrive to permit such medical attention.

◆ *Housing*

The implementation of Niger State government housing policy is outstanding and worthy of commendation. The team from NGF is at Talba Housing Estate, a 500 Medinna Housing units located at Gidan Mangoro an area on Minna-Bida Road.

The team is received at the estate by the commissioner for Lands and Housing, Mrs. Salome Ndakutsu and the General Manager, Niger Housing Corporation, A.C. Umaru Mohammed Bawa. The two, whose agencies supervise the construction of the complex, explains that the estate which has 200 units of 3-

bedrooms and 300 units of 2-bedrooms with amenities such as water, electricity, drainage and internal road networks cost a total of ₦1.8bn.

The project is financed through Public Private Partnership with Puzzles Group, a housing estate developer while the construction work at the site is done by Puzzles Construction and Engineering Company.

The project which started about November 2008 and sitting on a 65 hectares of land has a one year completion over 80% completion.

Similar housing project of the government is the M.I. Wushishi Housing Estate, Minna. This estate also has 500 units of buildings and another 250 units of buildings at Bida and Kotangora.

To completely alleviate housing problems of the people, the state government is also pursuing housing programmes in every local government of the state. At present work is on-going in the construction of 50-units of building in each of the twenty-five LGAs of the state.

The estate whose payment would be spread to cover thirty years by prospective civil servant beneficiaries of the facility at Talba and Wushishi estate would be offered at ₦1.9m (2 bedrooms at Wushishi), ₦2.9m (3 bedrooms at Wushishi), ₦3.3m (2 bedrooms at Talba) and ₦4.3m (3 bedrooms at Talba). 60% of the buildings would be allocated to civil servants at Talba while civil servants would get 90% allocation at Wushishi the remaining percentages at both estate would be allocated to interested members of the public.

◆ *Water*

The administration of Governor Aliyu Babangida is not unaware of the challenges of the people of Niger State in accessing constant supply of potable water. In realization of this problem, the state government was determined to

reverse the ugly situation. Hence, the rehabilitation of Bosso Water Treatment Plant.

The water treatment plant at Bosso, according to the General Manager, Niger State Water Board was built some sixty-two (62) years ago and since then had not received any major turn around in maintenance. With the capacity supply as low as 500,000 litres of water per day, Babangida-administration to evacuate both the Bosso and Talba dams which had silted up at the cost of ~~N~~210m and ~~N~~230m respectively.

Now, with the upgrading, facelift and construction of booster stations for the treatment plant, supply of water had been improved to 3million gallons per day. Altogether, according to the Chairman, Niger State Water Board, the state government had spent N1.7bn to improve other water plants across the state.

However, the team from NGF observed the absence of water laboratory at the plant for the quality control of water before distribution for the use of the people. During the courtesy visit to the Governor who was confronted with this health risk neglect, the governor immediately directed the Commissioner for Water and Natural Resources to prepare a budget for the construction of a laboratory at the plant.

◆ *Electricity*

The plan of the state government was to connect at least 126 communities to the national grid and also plan to explore the potentials available in solar energy to provide electricity in at least thirty communities. So far, eighty four communities have been connected to the national grid while thirty communities had been electrified using solar power.

Apart from the commendable street light projects within Minna metropolis, the Niger State government, under Governor Aliyu Babangida, has

also completed electrification projects at Makusidi, Somajiko and Baidna Farindoki.

◆ **Road**

With planned rehabilitation of 360km stretch of rural roads plus drainages and reconstruction/rehabilitation of 1000km stretch of road in the three senatorial zones of Niger state, the Babangida – administration is positioned to enhance economic activities of Niger state.

The state government has rehabilitated in 2008, 269km of paved road in Badeggi, Katcha, Gwada, Kuta Gurmana, Auna Tungan etc. The plan to improve township roads in the state has resulted in the construction of PDP Secretariat – Ladi Kwali at IBB way, dualisation of Muazu Mohammed – Kpakungu road and Yakubu Lane – Western Bye – Pass, Mona Juice Industrial Layout – Imani Avenue, Old ATC/Abattour/Maiduguri – Okada – Bosso Road and Old Secretariat Road all of these roads are within Minna, the capital city.

The government has plans to equally construct 75km stretch of township roads in Agwara, Erena, Diko, Agare, New Bussa, Kotangora etc.

In order to improve transport and infrastructure in the state, Babangida – administration embarked on the construction of thirteen modern parks, which were funded through the LGAs partnership, example of which the team from NGF was shown in Bida.

◆ **Aviation**

The Minna Airport also benefiting from the development plans of the Niger state governor, Alhaji Aliyu Babangida. The state government, in realization of the crucial importance of the airport for its proximity to Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja, the government embarked on the construction of a fuel dump at the airport to enable air-craft refuels at the airport.

The fuel dump, which was constructed by direct labour, cost the state government #80.1m. The airport, which was visibly under utilized, was according to the Air Manager, Mr. Ahmed Adamu, has been recording once – in – a – while flight landing.

The Director of Aviation and Maritime services at the airport, Alhaji Abdulrahman Yusuf intimated the team with challenges facing the effective operation of the airport to include runs way faded marking which was crucial to landing of aircraft, epileptic power supply among others. However, the government of Niger state has planned to provide the airport with a dedicated electricity line.

Economic Development

◆ *Tourism*

Niger State government is working round the clock to place the state on international tourist map. The government is already exploring the institutional and infrastructural enhancements that would provide leverage for investment in this sector. One of such institutions being explored is the Colonial Cemetery, Zungeru.

The state government has concluded arrangement for the take off of the Colonial Cemetery in Zungeru as a destination for international tourists. The cemetery, which is a bundle of history of the British Colonial Pacification of Northern Nigeria, had two exclusive burial grounds for the volute colonial officers and their families and the other one for the blacks that worked with the colonialists.

The state government was said to have taken a manifest of the names of the British dead that were buried at the site and through the colonial gazette in London, had succeeded in reaching out to some of the relatives of those buried at Zugeru. Some of those relatives had already visited the cemetery.

As observed on the team's visit to the cemetery, the state government is already rehabilitating the place in order to transform it for economic advantage of Niger State.

The state government has also completed plans to further enhance the potentials of the following tourist centres in the state. Kainji Lake Water Front, Shiroro Dam, Gurara Falls and the promotion of notable annual festivals of music. Durbar as well as construction of Hotels in Suleja and Minna. Niger state government in its action plan for 2007 – 2011 had already budgeted #136.8m in conjunction with appropriate partners to actualize its tourism programme.

◆ *Agriculture*

Niger State, with its landmarks of 86,000 square kilometers (8.6 million hectares), is endowed with favourable soil conditions to support crop farming. More than 60% of the people living in Niger state survive on subsistence agriculture. Agriculture has, therefore, remained a valued sector of priority in Niger state.

Hence, the vision of the state government is to transform the state into one of the top three best economies in Nigeria by 2020 by being a model and leader in agro – based industrialization.

The focus on Niger state government is to enhance efficient mechanized agricultural practice in achieving food security. It has completed plans in partnership with the local government arrears to provide 150 MF tractors and 500 units of animal traction implement between now and 2011 to increase food production.

Fertilizer remains a major ingredient that improves crop yield, on which the state farmers have relied to overcome the stress of agricultural activities on the vast cultivable lands of the state. Niger state government with the LGAs is

determined to supply 70,000 metric tonnes of assorted fertilizers to farmers in order to increase farm yields.

To facilitate regular supply of fertilizer, the state government has rehabilitated the Fertilizer Blending Plant in Zungeru. The plant, which was renovated at a cost of #35m, is capable of producing 25 to 30 metric tonnes of fertilizer per day according to Mr. Mike Akkary, the Chief Executive Officer of Akkary Ltd, a firm that designs and fabricates the fertilizer blending machines at the plant.

Niger state is also a major stakeholder in rice farming in Nigeria. The state government has initiated the resuscitation of Badeggi Rice Mill and has plans to establish 150 new processing centres/mills for rice, goundnuts and cassava.

At the rice mill in Badeggi, the team from NGF was told that the mill which had been shut down for over twelve years (12yrs) was reactivated through Public – Private Partnership initiative of Babangida – administration. The mill, which has been conceded to Deanshagar Projects Limited, the private partner company, would be on lease to the company for three years which is renewable thereafter.

According to Mr. Ramakrishna Badhei, the project manager at the site in company of the mill's General Manager, Mr. Adamu Moh'D Muktar Ruma, the refurbished mill could produce 20,000 tonnes of rice per day. However, plans have been concluded to install new machines in order to increase capacity production to 80,000 tonnes of rice per day.

◆ **Commerce and Industry**

As part of the plans of Babangida – administration to improve the industrial base of the state, the state government has reviewed and resuscitated the industrial layouts in Minna, Garam and Suleja. It has also resuscitated its

ailing companies, specifically, Niger sack and Fertilizer Blending Plant, Zungeru, for privatization.

The state government is also creating enabling and conducive environment for trades and commerce in the state to bloom. The team from NGF visited the newly completed Beji Ultramodern International Market, Beji, where the team was received by the Chairman, Beji Local Government, Alhaji Shehu Barwa Beji.

The market, which would be dedicated to trading in yam, cattle and sheep for which Beji town was renowned, consisted of five blocks of thirty lock – up shops for yam, three blocks of thirty open stalls, two blocks of public convenience and one administrative block. The project, on thirty – two hectares of land, was handled by Raftbase Nigeria Ltd and Islam Construction at a cost of #120m

Similarly, the desire to improve trading in Niger state has translated to the construction of Yaya Abubakar Ultramodern Central Motor Park, Bida, a project which consisted of eighty (80) lock – up shops, eleven warehouse, a bank, fire service station and a police post.

The motor park which has capacity for one thousand (1000) vehicles was handed by Upper Level Nigeria Ltd at a cost of #179m. According to the Chairman, Bida Local Government, Bida, Engr. Sharu Mohammed, the park when completed would boost the IGR of the local government.

Administration and Sustainability

◆ Capacity Building and Training

The government of Niger state, under Alhaji Aliya Babangida, is committed to strengthening the expertise of its workforce. In the health sector, the state government, having established an agency for the management of the

HIV/AIDS pandemic, had to retrain some twenty health personnel for effective coordination and reporting.

Related, the government of Niger state is sponsoring the promotion of research into alternative medicine. Already, a joint forum of orthodox and traditional medicine practitioners on alternative medicine connected at health forum which held at least four times in a year.

In order to ensure the efficiency of the civil service, the state government embarked on the rehabilitation of both the old and new state secretariat by providing roads, repainting of the building to improve their aesthetics, provision of furniture and fittings and general improvement on the landscape of both facilities. The newly rehabilitated office building of the secretary to the state government within the old secretariat is a testimony of the state government intervention. Similar rehabilitation was effected on the official residence of the governor.

◆ **Youth Development**

Emphasis has been placed on the development of youths in Niger state. In particular, the states poverty alleviation programme targets mainly the youth. With the rehabilitation of the National Youth Service Corps orientation camp at Paiko, it is evident the government of Alhaji Aliya Babangida is determined to improve the status and conditions under which the youths carried out their development activities.

Also, the state government, through its various programme is targeting to create strong moral and dependable youth. Government plans are to empower the youths through sound education, provision of jobs, sports and creation of other enabling environment for the youth to creatively and positively contribute to the development of the state.

The institution and establishment of microfinance banks across the state is a major strategy at assisting the youth easy access to soft loans to economically develop themselves and thereby boosting the economy of the state. Such microfinance banks are already completed at Maikunkele (Ayajiebo Micro Finance Bank), Lemu (Micro Finance Bank, Chigbe Yaji) and Doko (Bejin Doko Micro Finance Bank).

◆ **Environmental Protection**

The government of Niger state is improving the aesthetic of the environment especially, Minna, the capital city. Government has constructed drainages to reduce incident of flood and it is also providing street lights to add beauty to the major roads of Minna at night.

However, the government has equally made a long term plan to sustain environmental protection in the state. First, it has held stakeholders forum to discuss waste management strategies for implementation in 2008. It is also sensitizing the people on environmental sanitation with the Niger state environmental Laws and Legislation as the legal instrument to make people comply.

To effectively collect and dispose refuse in the state, Babaginda – administration has planned for procurement, two refuse compactor machine/vehicles every twenty – four (24) months.

◆ **Law and Order**

Niger state government is approaching the issue of security, law and order in a different way. The government, determined to protect life and property in the state, is inculcating right values in the youth, reducing unemployment and waging war against all other social vices. Success in this

approach is believed would effectively reduce incidents of insecurity and crime in the society.

In addition, the state government is determined to reduce the cost of pursuing justice in the state to enable the poor have access to the courts. Also, mobile courts are established to quickly dispense justice in minor cases and settlement of disputes.

◆ **Legislature**

The legislature has remained one of the vibrant arms of government in Niger state. The Babaginda – administration has further strengthened the work of the legislature through the provision of infrastructure and logistic support. The government has constructed additional block of office accommodation for the honourable members, and improved the aesthetic quality of the assembly complex by repainting the building there.

◆ **Ward Committees**

A noble approach to governance in Niger state is the constitution of ward committees in every ward in all the LGAs. The committee, which was instituted in order to appropriately determine the priority need(s) of the people at the ward levels, was provided with #500,000 monthly allocations to execute identified projects at the ward levels.

Government also put in place monitoring mechanism to ensure prudent and judicious spending of the said allocation as each ward committee was expected to provide evidence of what it did with previous allocation before it could receive another.

NGF TOUR OF KOGI STATE

Sunday 2nd August – Tuesday 4th August, 2009

Brief History

Kogi is a state in the north-central zone of Nigeria. It is popularly called the Confluence State because the confluence of River Niger and River Benue is at its capital, Lokoja, which is the first administrative capital of modern-day Nigeria. It was in Lokoja, while gazing out at the river that stretched before her, that Lord Lugard's wife coined the name "Nigeria." Lokoja is 2-hour drive from Abuja.

The state was formed in 1991 from parts of Kwara State and Benue State. The State as presently constituted comprises the peoples of the defunct Kabba Province of Northern Nigeria.

There are three main ethnic groups and languages in Kogi: Igala, Ebira, and Okun (similar to Yoruba) with other minorities like Bassa, a small fraction of Nupe mainly in Lokoja, Gwari, Kakanda, Oworo people (similar to Yoruba), and the Eggan community under Lokoja Local Government.

The state with a population of 3,599,789 according to 2005 estimate and twenty – one local governments, is presently governed by Alhaji Ibrahim Idris, a Peoples Democratic Party member.

The Arrival

NGF team of some secretariat staff, journalists and researchers arrived Lokoja, the capital city of Kogi State on Sunday, 2nd August, 2009. At the Government House Lokoja, the team is received by a team of commissioners, Special Assistants, Permanent Secretaries and Directors. They are already set to start off the inspection of projects executed by His Excellency, Alhaji Ibrahim Idris, the Governor of Kogi State. The tour of the state ended with an interactive session with key officers of the government and a courtesy call on the governor, Alhaji Ibrahim Idris.

The three days inspection of projects in the State is discussed in four categories of Human Resource Development and Empowerment, Infrastructural Development, Economic Development and Administration and Sustainability.

Human Resource Development and Empowerment

◆ Education

Education, a key component to development is at the crossroad as at the time Governor Ibrahim Idris came into office. The governor, who is on his second term, having being elected for the first term in May 29, 2003 and reelected in May 2007, was said to have met a University that was not its name in course content, manpower and infrastructure, a polytechnic that had no engineering programme and many dilapidated secondary and primary schools.

Those are the submissions of the Commissioner Education Hon. Sylvester Onoja on the state of education in Kogi State until the intervention of Governor Ibrahim Idria. He say the governor has increased the number of science secondary schools from thirteen (13) to forty-three (43), has facilitated the addition of engineering programme to the courses offered by Kogi State Polytechnic, Lokoja and has done immensely well in improving the status of Kogi State University, Anyigba. The university, which had only six professors and many unaccredited courses before the administration of Governor Ibrahim Idris could now boast of thirty-three (33) professors and twenty-nine (29) fully accredited courses.

The Commissioner for Education Hon. Sylvester Onoja further says the state government has improved the quality of education by involving the communities in regular monitoring of schools towards stemming the wave of examination malpractices which had become endemic in the school system in Kogi State until Governor Ibrahim Idris intervention.

The education policy of the government is very favourable to the development of education in the state as Kogi State government has paid its counterpart fund to UBEC up till date. As evident at LGEA Primary School, Ganaja and Ganaja UBE Junior Secondary School (both schools located within same compound) where the team from NGF conducts a spot check of situation in the education sector of the state, it is clear that Kogi State needs to improve the infrastructure and manpower base of her foundation schools, that is, the primary and secondary schools.

However, at Kogi State University, Anyigba, where the team from NGF, is received by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Hassan S. Isah and other principal officers of the university, the government of Kogi State is making tremendous impact. Apart from improving on the infrastructural facilities of the university,

the course content and manpower of the institution have been improved. The intervention of Gov. Ibrahim Idris administration in the university has culminated in the impressive rating of the University graduates by Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC).

The University, according to the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Hassan Isah, has graduated six thousand seven hundred (6,700) students and now has a population of nine thousand, six hundred (9,600) students. The university, which is just ten years old, has already commenced postgraduate programmes in six faculties and plans have been concluded to start off the College of Medicine of the University soonest.

◆ **Health**

The determination and commitment of Governor Ibrahim Idris towards reversing the poor infrastructural and facility states of the health sector in Kogi State translates into the construction of Kogi State Specialist Hospital, Lokoja.

The specialist hospital which is completed in 2007 is according to the Chief Medical Director, Prof. John Onuminya, having two specialist doctors in each specialty area of medicine. With thirty-seven (37) medical doctors and sixteen (16) medical consultants, the CMD says the hospital has overcome basic requirements of hospital but is now looking ahead for installation of high technological facilities.

The CMD, Prof. John Enekele Onuminya says the government is fully funding the hospital and that the government has recently promised to ensure the staff welfare package of the hospital staff is at par with that of any other tertiary health institutions in the country; in addition, plans have been concluded to build quarters for the staff within the hospital compound.

To complement the service of the tertiary and secondary health care institutions in Kogi State, the state government, in its desire to fulfil the Millennium Development Goals in health care delivery, has accessed N408million under the conditional Grant Scheme (CGS) of MDG to provide primary health care centres in the state.

Presently, according to the Special Assistant to the Governor on MDGs, the government is funding about ten (10) primary health care centres in each of the local government areas of the state. The government is equally funding the roll-back malarial programme and has purchased drugs and mosquito nets to effectively stamp out malarial.

In addition, under the MDGs programme, the state has constructed sixty (6) VIP toilets in all the local government areas vis-à-vis the construction of surface and borehole water scheme.

◆ **Poverty Alleviation Scheme**

The Special Assistant to the Governor on Youth Empowerment, informs the NGF team of the state government's efforts towards empowering the youths and by so doing alleviate poverty. He says the state government has up till date given out to empower the youths on thousand and fifty tricycles, five hundred (500) tractors to youth organized cooperative societies. Also, five thousand (5000) youths are paid monthly stipend to help them train and acquire skills in trades which cost the government N5m monthly.

He also informs the team of the establishment of a skill acquisition centre in Lokoja at a cost of N35million. The centre, which has eleven departments, is to train the youths to acquire skills in order to curb youth restiveness in the state.

Infrastructural Development

◆ Roads

His Excellency, Alhaji Ibrahim Idris commitment to easy flow of traffic within Lokoja and environs has resulted in the construction of 8.3km internal street roads at CAC, 7km dualisation of Lokoja-Ganaja Road and 23.5km construction of Ganaja – Ajaokuta road (a federal government road).

These projects according to the Commissioner for Works, Hon (Dr.) Abubakar Abdulkareem, are embarked upon in order to ease the congestion of traffic within the major streets of the city and also to make driving pleasurable for inter-states vehicles plying the Ganaja-Ajaokuta federal road.

The 8.3km internal road and the 7km dualisation of Lokoja-Ganaja road are awarded to Zerock Construction Nig. Ltd at a contract sum of N2.3bn. The 23.5km Ganaja – Lokoja Road being handled by Rockbridge Construction Limited is awarded at a cost of N3.3bn. All these projects are to be completed by February 2010.

Earlier, in 2007, the government, under the administration of Alhaji Ibrahim Idris has commissioned for use the 8km Okene – Ege – Ehima road in Adavi Local Government Area of Kogi State. The road which was started by the administration of Alhaji Ibrahim Idris in 2006 was awarded to AI-Usabs Construction Nigeria Limited at a cost of N555m.

The Commissioner of Works, Hon. (Dr.) Abubakar Abdulkareem informs the NGF team of the plans of the government to construct some kilometers of township roads in other major towns of Kogi State.

◆ Water

Prior to the intervention of Alhaji Ibrahim Idris-administration, water supply to the over three million people in Kogi State was at a low capacity of thirteen million gallons (13million) a day. That was the information the Special Assistant the Governor on Water Resources, gave the team from NGF. He however says, the government has decided to provide its population in every community access to clean potable water, hence the decision of the government to award for construction the Greater Lokoja Water scheme which would generate 60,000cm³ of water upon completion in twenty-four (24) months time. The contract which is already three months old at thirty percent (30%) upfront payment to CGC, a Chinese firm, would cost the government a sum of N9bn.

The General Manager, Kogi State Water Board explains to NGF team that the greater Lokoja water scheme is planned to bridge the gap of the shortfalls in water supply in the state. He says the project will comprise an intake of 10m gallons a day, three (3) sedimentation tank, five (5) clarifiers to generate 19million gallons a day and a 2.2million-gallon air water tank.

Apart from the visit to the site of Greater Lokoja Water Scheme, the team from NGF is taken to see the water project at Kabba-Bunu Local Government Area. The rural water scheme of the local government at Okedayo-Kabba is inspected by the team. The bore-hole water projects which the Vice-Chairman of the Local government, Hon. Muhideen Olusegun Solomon, says covers fifteen (15) communities are completed just three months ago at a cost of N4m each. The one at Okedayo is found defective. The facilities provided have broken down since commissioning according to the beneficiary indigenes at Okedayo.

The same is the situation at Kabba Water Works Kabba, where the personnel met on site requested urgent intervention of government to improve the services of the facility to the people of Kabba and environs.

◆ **Housing**

The housing programme of Alhaji Ibrahim Idris administration is geared towards providing accommodation for the civil servants in the state. In pursuance of this laudable objective, the state government completed in 2005 and 2007, the 500-unit Ganaja Housing Estate and 250-Unit Otokiti Housing Estate respectively. The two housing estates which are fully occupied by civil servants are sold at subsidized rates based on owner-occupier policy of the government.

The commissioner for works, Hon. (Dr.) Abubakar Abdulkareem informs the team from NGF that both estates at Ganaja and Otokiti built by a consortium of contractors at a combined cost of N2.5bn. He says further that 3-bedroom apartment is offered at N4m, 2-bedroom at N3m while 1-bedroom goes for N2m.

◆ **Electricity**

According to the submission of Engr. Paul Attah, the Director-General, Directorate of Rural Development, Kogi State, an agency which is saddled with responsibilities of providing social infrastructures such as water, feeder roads and electricity for the rural communities, the state government has up till date completed thirty-three (33) electrification projects while over seventy communities in the state have benefited from the one hundred and fifty-four (154) transformers which the government procured to boost electricity supply

Economic Development

◆ **Agriculture**

The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Kogi State, informs the NGF team during the interactive session with the officials of the state

government, that Kogi State being mainly populated by farmers has compelled the state to provide incentives to encourage higher farm yield.

Apart from the state direct distribution of fertilizer to the local governments for sale to farmers at 42% subsidy by government, the state government has facilitated several other inputs towards improving agriculture by instituting Kogi Agricultural Trust Fund through which the government makes available N250m to banks for interested farmers to access.

Also, the government, according to the Permanent Secretary, is encouraging the youth to embrace farming. He says N17.4m has been awarded to one thousand (1,000) youth to help them start fish farming.

The government of Kogi State has equally provided two hundred and twenty-seven (227) 60 horsepower tractors which are distributed to the local government areas of the state. In addition, the state government is encouraging every civil servant in the state to own a farm by providing them with farm land each year in order to ensure the full success of the Kogi Food for All Programme (KOFAP) initiated by the state government to ensure food security.

◆ **Commerce and Industry**

Kogi State government, in its efforts to encourage and boost the commercial activities potentials of the state, has constructed an ultra-modern international market in Lokoja. The market, which consists of two thousand, four hundred (2400) lock-up shops, traditional open stall complex, some amenity buildings for banks, clinic, administrative office, police station, conveniences, a mosque and a fire service station. The market also has some warehouse for major marketers and a concrete pedestrian crossing to guarantee safety of both sellers and consumers at the market when crossing the highway that runs along the market.

The market which is built by Zerock Construction is said to have cost the state government N3.8bn. Its administration would be given to a managing consultant for effectiveness. Also, to boost commercial activities in Kogi State, the Commissioner for Commerce and Industry says the state government has signed an MoU with the Bank of Industry to the tune of N3bn to assist the state reactivate its moribund industries. In addition, plans to establish a sugar factory has been completed and government has concluded plan to invest \$250,000 in the project.

Administration and Sustainability

◆ Sports

The administration of Alhaji Ibrahim Idris, has embarked on the construction of a 20,000 capacity stadium in Lokoja. A project which started in July 2008 by Tec Engineering Company Ltd, a Chinese firm, would be completed by December 2009.

Chinese personnel of the construction firm at the stadium inform the team from NGF that the state government has paid N900m so far out of the N1.8bn total contract sum for the project. The stadium complex is designed to include two training pitches, administrative office, indoor, sports hall, and VIPs stand.

◆ Environmental Protection

In order to make Lokoja, the capital city, and its environs more environmental friendly in terms of refuse collection and disposal, the Commissioner for Environment and Physical Development, Dr. Mohammed Sule

Bello, informs that the state government has just procured four refuse disposal trucks to improve refuse collection and disposal system in the state.

Away from refuse collection and disposal, the Commissioner for Environment and Physical Development says the state government is determined to explore the proximity of Lokoja, the state capital, to Abuja by improving on the environment. The government is about completing a N62m master plan project for Lokoja just as N165m has been spent on consultancy by the government to establish a Geographic Information Service (GIS) for the state.

◆ **Due Process and Public Procurement Bill**

The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Justice informs that the bill on due process law and public procurement are already before the state house of assembly.

◆ **Local Government Administration**

The Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs informs the team of the formation of Community Development Committee across local governments with responsibility of identifying the immediate needs of their communities for government action. Through, this initiatives, he claims, every ward in the state now has water, primary health care centres etc.

The Commissioner is also quick to appraise the administration of Alhaji Ibrahim Idris which never deduct any illegal fund from the statutory allocation due to the local governments. The excess crude oil fund, according to him, is strictly spent on executing capital projects in the state.

The non-illegal deduction claims of the Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs is corroborated by Hon. Abubakar Adagu Suburu, the Chairman, Okehi Local Government. Area, Obangede, Kogi State

when the team from NGF visits the secretariat to see the newly completed secretariat complex which according to the Chairman cost a sum of N57m.

The Chairman, Hon. Abubakar Adagu Suberu says that the state government under Alhaji Ibrahim Idris has never deducted any illegal fund from the LGAs fund other than the statutory deductions such as pensions and the 1% local government funding of the state university.

NGF TOUR OF NASARAWA STATE **TUESDAY, 4TH – FRIDAY, 7TH AUGUST, 2009**

Brief History

Nasarawa State was created on October 1st, 1996. It was carved out of the present day Plateau State. The capital city of the state is Lafia, from which the governor, Alh. Aliyu Akwe Doma, a PDP member, administers the state.

Nasarawa State, with a population of 2,040,097 according to 2005 estimate, has thirteen local government areas. Its key towns are Lafia, Akwanga, Keffi, Nasarawa and Doma.

Arrival in Lafia, the capital of Nasarawa State

The team of journalists, researchers and some staff of NGF Secretariat arrived Lafia, the capital of Nasarawa State around 8:00pm on Tuesday, 4th August, 2009.

The team was received at office of the Secretary to the State Government, where the honourable SSG, Mr. Timothy A. Anjide, personally welcomed the team to Nasarawa State on behalf of people and government of the state. He informed the team of the readiness of the state as the itinerary of the state projects had been prepared for the inspection of the team.

The inspection of projects executed by His Excellency, Aliyu Akwe Doma, lasted two days culminating in an interactive session with members of the state executive council. That session was presided over by the Secretary to the State Government, Mr. Timothy Anjide who represented His Excellency, Aliyu Akwe Doma who was unavoidably absent at the session.

The findings of the team are segmented for discussions.

Human Development and Empowerment

◆ *Education*

The administration of Governor Aliyu Akwe Doma, has from inception, realized qualitative education as the key driver of modern economies. He has

realized the advantages of inherent in the encouragement of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) based to the flow of information and technology. These, he has captured in his agenda for education in the state.

To ensure that people living in Nasarawa State has access to quality university education, the administration of Governor Akwe Doma has provided infrastructure assistance to the Nasarawa State University, Keffi and the National Open University, Lafia Study centre.

At Nasarawa State University, Keffi, where Doma-administration has constructed for the university, three faculty buildings, the Registrar of the university, Alhaji Dalhatu O. Mamman, informs the team that the university is largely dependent on the goodwill of Nasarawa State government. The university, according to him, is making efforts towards attracting funds from external linkages and at the same engaging in consulting services to boost the Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) of the University.

Apart from buildings donated to the university through philanthropists' gesture of people like Chief (Mrs.) Cecilia Ibru and General T.Y. Danjuma, the university management has been able to complete two other lecture theatres of 1000 and 500 capacity respectively through funds realized from local governments in the state and Educational Trust Fund (ETF)

The university, according to the Registrar, is currently rated seventh among state universities by National Universities commission (NUC). It has forty-eight courses out of which thirteen are on interim accreditation while the computer science programme of the university has been denied accreditation owing to lack of basic facilities.

The administration of Governor Akwe Doma has also impacted on the fortune of the National Open University, Lafia Study Centre, by providing a befitting office complex for the operations of the institution in Nasarawa State.

Similarly, the administration of Governor Aliyu Akwe Doma is improving the infrastructures of primary and secondary schools in the state. According to Dr. Harry Mohammed, the Special Assistant to the Governor on Multilateral Affairs, while inspecting classroom building provided for the effective operation of the UBE scheme at Kofar Hausa primary School, Keffi, the government of Nasarawa has constructed over one hundred blocks of classrooms across the state.

The Principal of the Junior Secondary School section of the school, Mrs. Aisha Bala lamented the inadequate classroom space as the problem of the school. Also, while appreciating the efforts of the state government so far, she requested the government to provide perimeter fence for the school to deter encroachment.

The team is also taken to see what government of Nasarawa State is doing at the Government College, Keffi. Dr. Harry Mohammed explains that the government has provided the vast compound of the school with perimeter fence and the government is also intending to rehabilitate the structures in the school to make learning conducive for the students.

To complement the efforts of the parents in providing exercise books and textbooks for their wards in schools, the state government has purchased in large quantity textbooks and exercise books for distribution free of charge to the students. At the Government Science School, Lafia, where the books are held in store, the team is told that the government has spent about ₦105m to purchase the books.

◆ *Health*

The health agenda of Governor Aliyu Akwe Doma is to improve health care delivery services with emphasis on prevalence health care in tune with the

requirement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The governor is truly working in consonance with the fulfillment of his set agenda.

At a model primary health care centre at Ginda 'B', where the government has established its presence among the folks resident in the different terrain of Ginda, by providing them with safe potable water in addition to the health centre.

The health care centre, according to Dr. Harry Mohammed, Special Assistant, Multilateral Affairs, is a prototype model of fifty-eight other ones across the state. The water project for Ganda 'B' a community some difficult kilometers up rocky hill, cost the state government ₦7.6m to source water from a spring to generate 20,000 litres of water and reticulates up the hill to serve the villages that scatter about the Ginda district.

◆ *Skills Acquisition and Empowerment*

With the launching of the Bureau for Economic Empowerment in Nasarawa State, the state government is determined to transform the lives of the youths and women of Nasarawa State.

The Bureau for Economic Empowerment, headed by a Director General, Barr. Labaran Magaji, has three (3) directorates which cover skill acquisitions, business development and small and medium enterprises.

The team from NGF is taken to see the commitment of the government to equip its youths with requisite skills for the challenges of making a livelihood in Nigeria. At Nasarawa and Lafia Skills Acquisition centres, the facilities and the tempo of activities on-going at the centres are bench markable for other states.

Apart from the equipment on ground at Nasarawa and Lafia, the team is astonished with the quality of work on display at the Skills Acquisition Centre, Lafia. Some of the projects already completed by trainees at the centre include

massage bed, hospital ward screen, bunk beds, tricycle for disabled persons, wheel chairs, hospital beds, iron doors, furniture, etc.

The four acquisition centres of Nasarawa State government at Doma, Lafia, Nasarawa and Wamba are offering courses in the following trades: Welding/Metal Fabrication, Wood Work/Carpentry, Electrical/Electronics Repair, Building Technology, tailoring etc.

Apart from the skill acquisitions programme of the directorate, the bureau is helping to improve the lots of the women who are engaged in small and medium enterprises by assisting them with soft loans through Micro-Finance Banks. It has also facilitated easy access to loan for over three hundred and forty-five (345) indigeneous contractors through what the Director General of the Bureau; Barr Labaron Magaji tagged Nasarawa State government bank guarantee support for contract financing.

Infrastructures Development

◆ Roads

With over 395km road project across the state at ₦19.98bn, Governor Aliyu Akwe Doma is taking a giant stride in the provision of motorable roads in both the urban and rural areas of Nasarawa State.

In Lafia, the capital city of Nasarawa State, His Excellency has completed a 16km solar-powered street-lighting project. In addition, the state government has awarded for expansion and reconstruction some of the narrow township roads in Lafia. To gain the width required for the road expansion, Dr. Harry Mohammed informs the team from NGF that the state government had to demolish some buildings for which the state government had to pay compensation to the affected owners. The project, which cost ₦969million, is on-

going as witnessed by the team from the roundabout at Doma Road junction through the Lafia Central Mosque and beyond.

The determination of Doma-administration to provide roads reaching to every rural communities of the state, to enable easy transportation of people and goods is becoming a reality. The team was at Gudi Junction – Angwan Zaria Road Project site. The road, which links about nine (9) villages, is awarded to Stateco Nigeria Ltd at a cost of ~~N~~950,089,203.20k, according to Engr. Y.M. Aliu, a Director in the Civil Engineering Department of Nasarawa State Ministry of Works.

The contractor, Engr. J. Wahab, was also at the site to receive the team. He explained that the 13km road project consists of a 30metres span bridge and some box cuverts. He told the team that the project would be completed by December 2009.

Similarly, the team was at another rural road project at Nasarawa-Eggon. The project, Nasarawa-Eggon-Mada Station Road is a 30km road construction awarded to Sharafa Brothers (Nig.) Ltd at a contract sum of ~~N~~619,616,55m. The contractor, Engr. Mohammed Al Rawas was on site to receive the team. He told the team that the project was started in March 2008 and would be completed in some days to come within August 2009.

At the Doma-Akwatta, 50km first phase road project site at Doma town, the Director Civil Engineering Department, Ministry of Works Nasarawa State, Engr. Y.M. Aliu informed the team that the project was awarded to PW Nigeria Limited at a contract sum of ~~N~~3.766bn. The project which began in March 2008 and had some 48km already would be completed in October 2009.

The Director further said that the second phase of the road project, which is 88km long, would soon commence from Akwatta to Akpanaja.

◆ *Water*

The Doma Dam Water Treatment Plant was a regional water scheme designed for farm irrigation, power supply and distribution of potable water to the people of Doma and environs. The project, which had been abandoned by the Federal Government who initiated it in the 90s, was awarded to Ibrums System Nigeria Limited for rehabilitation and expansion of capacity from 3million gallons/day to 5million gallons/day.

Engr. Umar Abdullahi, Chief Water Engineer at the Nasarawa State Water Board told the team at the Doma Dam site that the government of Nasarawa State also awarded for construction, a 40km expansion and extension of water pipes networking to reach Lafia and Obi.

The turn-around project at the site is already yielding results. With a new 1000KVA power generator provided, Engr Umar Abdullahi said the treatment plant could now pump water twice a week for the use of the people. The project was awarded in May 2008 at a cost of ₦307m, is now ready for commissioning.

◆ *Housing*

The administration of Governor Aliyu Akwe Doma has set an agenda of providing qualitative and affordable houses for all segments of people in Nasarawa State. The 500-Housing Unit Project in Lafia is a testimony of Doma-administration to bring his housing agenda to reality. The housing units in Lafia consist of 3-Bedroom (Detached) and 2-Bedroom (Semi-Detached) bungalow buildings.

The bigger project in housing provision agenda of Governor Akwe Doma, according to the Commissioner for Housing and Urban Development, Mr. Philip Adgidzi, is the proposed 6000 – units of housing at Karu axis of the state. The

project is to be funded through Private-Public partnership with a foreign estate developer.

◆ *Electricity*

Since coming into office in May 2007, Governor Aliyu Akwe Doma has purchased 20Nos 5000KVA transformers for electricity supply to communities in the state in addition to his construction of 11KV HT lines and donation of 11KVA transformer to PHCN to boost electricity supply in Lafia.

According to the Managing Director of the Nasarawa State Energy Commission, the state government is pursuing an independent power project tagged Farin Ruwa Hydro Power Plant. This project is planned to generate 3000 megawatts of electricity. The state is also planning exploring the potentials of generating electricity from wind, coal and biomass. He concluded that the state is looking ahead to securing \$200m World Bank loan to support the project.

Doma-administration is already delivering on his promise of electrifying the rural areas. The team was at Ara Junction in Nasarawa town to see the 20km Ara rural electrification project. Mallam Hassan Haske and indigenous contractor handling the project, told the team that the project is already 95% completed with two 500KVA transformers, awaiting PHCN for connection to the grid.

Mallam Hassan Haske said six communities would benefit from the project, which was awarded in May 2008 at a cost of ₦81.3m.

Similar projects have been completed at Mararaba-Udegi, Nasarawa-Mararaba, Udegi-Udegi Beki and Odu just as the state government has connected Aroogreshen-Akpata to the national grid.

Economic Development

◆ *Tourism*

The government of Nasarawa State, under Governor Aliyu Akwe Doma, is evolving a strong tourism agenda through which the state government intends to boost the economic activity of Nasarawa State.

At present the state is planning an eco-tourism development around Farin Ruwa Waterfall in Farin Ruwa Development Area in Wamba Local Government Area. The waterfall, which is already listed as a world tourist site by the World Tourism Organisation is already being repackaged with improved facilities by Nasarawa State government in order to bring more tourists to the alluring green forest and the breathtaking waterfall.

During the interactive session, Mrs. Lantana Ahmed, the Special Assistant on Culture and Tourism, said the Nasarawa State government is investing about ₦3.5bn to the development of Farin Ruwa Eco-Tourism project.

Apart from Farin Ruwa project, Mrs. Lantana Ahmed also listed many other tourists' destinations in the state to include Doma Dam, Keana and Awe Salt mines, Akiri Warm Spring, Maloney Hills, Eggon Hills, Omete Festival, Agabu/Ogan Fishing Festival among others. At present, the government is committed to developing all these tourism potentials to boost the state economy just as Doma-administration has signed an MOU with Grand Parks and Imam Resorts for the establishment of Tourist Resorts in Karu.

◆ *Agriculture*

To ensure sustenance in food provision, create employment and enhance economic empowerment of the people, Doma-administration is putting in place motivating incentives to attract more people to Agriculture.

The Bada Koshi Agricultural Scheme is launched by the state government to coordinate a five-year (2009-2014) planned growth in the agricultural sector.

Among the strategies to drive the success of the scheme is the plan to support farmers with tractors and other farm machineries, provision of storage facilities in all local government areas, involvement and enhancement of access to farmland for small scale farmers among others.

With the purchase of one hundred and twenty one (121) tractors for distribution to farmer cooperative societies coupled with over 51,500 metric tones of fertilizer at subsidized rate to the farmers in 2008 alone, the government is sure enhancing food security for the state and the country at large.

At the Agricultural Development Board compound, the team from NGF was told of the plan of the government to purchase another one hundred and seven (107) tractors for 2009. As observed, eighty of the tractors have been supplied; the remaining twenty-seven are being waited.

Within the same compound, the team was taken to see the Nasarawa State Fertilizer Blending Plant. As explained at the plant, the facility is capable of producing 40metric tones (300 bags) of fertilizer per hour. The fertilizer blending project is to make fertilizer easily accessible to the farmers in Nasarawa State.

◆ *Industrialisation*

The agenda of Doma-administration to industrialise Nasarawa State by attracting investors to the state may still be far from the target of that government. It is however, worthy to note that the government of Nasarawa is leaving no stone unturned to achieve a significant level of industrialization.

The state government has recently established Nasarawa Water Bottling Company in partnership with private sector. At the site of the company in Lafia,

the team from NGF was received by the company's General Manager/Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Daniel Ajegena, who conducted the team round the facilities installed for effective operation of the company.

The project, which cost ~~N~~300m with Nasarawa State government contributing 49% of the cost, is already in full operation with capability of producing 3000 bottles of water per hour.

Just as a 3-Star Conference Hotel has been completed and commissioned in Lafia, Nasarawa State Government, has signed an MOU with some private firms to establish a 5-Star Hotel in Lafia and another MOU for the construction of a cement factory in the state.

Another effort towards industrialization of Nasarawa State in the agro-allied sector is the construction of Yam and Sweet Potatoes Conditioning Centre in Keffi. The project, which cost ~~N~~269,112,931.00, is established to process for export yam and sweet potatoes to European countries and other international markets.

◆ *Solid Minerals and Natural Endowments*

The set agenda of the Nasarawa State government is to derive full economic benefits from the many solid mineral deposits available in large quantity in the state. Some of these minerals include amethyst, limestone, marble, iron ore, gemstone, talc, salt, etc.

The state government is already exploring the possibility of tapping intone of the resources available in Keana for economic benefit. Salt, is one of the natural endowments available in Keana, Nasarawa State. For ages, the native women have devised traditional means of extracting edible salt from the deposit available in the Keana salt lake.

The state government is exploring, through an on-going experiment, the possibility of automating the traditional system of salt extraction and distillation. The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Science and Technology, Mr. Echoda Anfofun, who explains the workings of the fabricated machines installed at the site, said the women of Keana hence for over one hundred (100) years used the traditional firing system which the new project is intended to modernize.

The project, which the Ministry of Science and Technology began in February 2009 in conjunction with expert input from Nasarawa State polytechnic, could produce 128kg quantity of salt in eight (8) hours.

Administration and Sustainability

◆ *Civil Service Capacity Building and Training*

In areas of training and capacity building, the civil service in Nasarawa State has been reorganized and rejuvenated. Civil servants now enjoy vehicle/furniture reeling loans, a package to which over one hundred and fifty (150) civil servants have become beneficiaries. Another 5000 workers in Nasarawa State have been provided opportunity to own a motorcycle on hire purchase.

The Nasarawa State Government House complex, the Deputy Governor's Office and the residence of the Honourable Speaker of Nasarawa State House of Assembly have been upgraded to provide these public officers with befitting and conducive accommodation for necessary to get the best out of them.

Also, the state government has just completed the state secretariat complex, the phase which would accommodate five ministries while other ministries are still maintaining their old premises.

The state government has reorganized its Internal Revenue Board for better service provision just as the state government is implementing all salary

increases approved at the national level, especially the 15% salary increase, CONTISS for tertiary institutions and the TSS for professional teachers.

The capacity building for civil servants has been reinforced through workshops and retreats organized in conjunction with the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON), Environmental Protection.

The administration of Governor Aliyu Akwe Doma is paying great attention to environmental issues. His administration has purchased garbage trucks for effective collection and disposal of refuse, built drainage infrastructure and instituted road cleaning through which many women are now gainfully employed. The government of Nasarawa State has reintroduced the monthly sanitation exercise to sustain the desire of the state government to keep Lafia and other major towns in the state clean.

◆ *Due Process and Public Procurement Bills*

The Attorney General, Ministry of Justice Nasarawa State, during the interactive session, informed that though the bills have not been passed into law, they have passed through the first reading in the state House of Assembly and are now before the appropriate committee of the House.

◆ *Law and Order*

In order to enhance effective dispensation of justice, the state government has completed three new High Court complex in Lafia. Each of the court building cost ₦38m.

The Nasarawa State government quest to secure life and properties in the state, has culminated in its donation of fifty (50) vehicles to the Nigerian Police, Nasarawa State command, to effectively combat crime in the state.

◆ *The Legislature*

The legislature is saddled with the responsibility of promulgating laws for effective running of governmental affairs in a state. Hence, this arm of government has to be in harmonious relationship with other arms of government for smooth running.

In Nasarawa State, the harmonious relationship between the executive and the legislature cannot be overemphasized. The state government is spending ₦1.7bn to reconstruct the Nasarawa State House of Assembly.

As explained by Dr. Harry Mohammed, Special Assistant, Multilateral Affairs, the buildings accommodating the legislature had become dilapidated, hence, the building were demolished for the new one to be constructed.

The project was started in February 2009 and was expected to be for six months. Shelter Development, an indigeneous builder, was the project contractor.

◆ *Local Government Administration*

The Commissioner for Local Government and Community Development, Alhaji Usman Bagudu Danladi, informed the team of the complementary roles local government administrators was playing in Nasarawa State to rapidly develop the state in line with the thirteen-point agenda of His Excellency, Gov. Aliyu Akwe Doma.

He said that issue of allocation to local governments had never been controversial in Nasarawa State the state in agreement with the local councils had put in place Joint Account committee, the body which determined the statutory deductions due to the state government and gave to the local councils their legal allocation.

This is my last week
and since I returned from
Amsterdam. it was nice
~~talking~~ meeting you. The
agenda for the Committee is
pretty extensive, I will be
looking ^{forward} ~~to~~ to working with you.

The impromptu visit of NGF team to the Secretariat of Nasarawa Local Government, Nasarawa, confirmed the healthy relationship between the state government and the local governments.

There, the Chairman, Barr. Moh'd Sanni Bawa informed the team that his administration is very supportive of the thirteen points agenda of the area of agriculture. Hence, the council had purchased twenty brand new tractors which would be distributed to farmers cooperative societies on four-tractors per a ward basis. This gesture was towards ensuring food security in the state.

◆ *Corporate Social Responsibility*

Every major contractor handling projects on behalf of the government and people of Nasarawa State are encouraged to give one social service the host community where they operated. This encouragement is yielding its gains.

At Doma, the team was shown a block of classrooms constructed by PW Nigeria Limited, for a school along the Doma-Akwatta Road which the company was handling.