

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

NIGERIA GOVERNORS' FORUM

"BRAND ACTIVITY (BA)"

**A PROACTIVE STRATEGY TO ADDRESS
THE NEGATIVE PERCEPTION/IMAGE CRISIS
OF THE OFFICE OF GOVERNORS IN NIGERIA**

**A SUBMISSION BY THE COMMITTEE
ON IMAGE BRANDING**

Introduction:

In recognition of the battered image and negative perception of the exalted office of Governors in Nigeria the Forum set up an image-branding committee to examine the phenomenon and suggest ways of holistically addressing this problem proactively. The committee submitted its initial report to the Forum but inadvertently, the Forum was unable to consider the report. Notwithstanding, the Forum gave a second mandate to the committee to fine-tune and represent the report to consideration of the Forum.

The office of Governor is the most strategic in the development efforts of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. But since 2003, the office of Governor has been exposed to more contempt and ridicule than never before, as Nigerians and the world saw some Governors manhandled and others portrayed as fugitives from the law. This negative perception has been transferred to the current Governors. Indeed the public attitude is that of waiting for when it will be the turn of the current Governors to be dragged off to jail.

If the Governors are **to perform**, they need **credibility** not only **within Nigeria** but more importantly **among the investing international community**. If the Governors are to attract the needed investment to create more jobs in their states, they must **exude the dignity of their office**; they must be seen as **credible and transparent** as well as being **genuinely concerned** about the **welfare of their citizens**.

Objective:

This report, therefore outlines strategies to **de-link** the current Governors **from the odium of the past**; to **re-package** and **market** the Governors **as credible** in the eyes of the international community; to attract the needed positive image to the Federation through the positive perception of the Governors; and to create conducive attitudinal environment for the Governors to conceive and implement laudable programmes and projects in their states. Above all, to carry the people along now that the global economy is in comatose.

The Problem:

The committee was able to identify the following image problems:

1. The image of the office of Governors across the country is in a sorry state. Deliberate and conscious efforts have been made by some agencies of the Federal Government charged with the responsibility of fighting corruption to stigmatize the institution of Governors using the media. This negative campaign motivated by political greed has been orchestrated but unfortunately remained unchallenged.
2. Even if the intention of the agencies of the Federal Government was to enlist public buy-in into their operations and to justify the need to bring corrupt former Governors to justice, the media have unwittingly been manipulated to create institutional perception problems for the office of Governors.
3. The larger implication of this is that the Governors, both former and serving ones, have been dangerously labeled and the Nigerian and international community have developed a mindset that would have unsettling effect on the Governors, if not changed.

4. In Nigeria, silence approximates acceptance of guilt or lack of defense. That no meaningful counter-measure has been collectively undertaken by the Governors has meant a gradual erosion of their credibility amongst Nigerians.
5. The recent revelations by some foreign companies of bribe offerings to some highly placed Nigerian public officials have compounded the image problems of **ALL** public officials in Nigeria, the Governors included. Thus, there is urgent need to dissociate the office of Governors from the odium.
6. Due to the lingering negative perception, Governors may increasingly find it difficult, in or out of office, to assert their leadership position in their communities.
7. A combination of the deathly struggle for political offices and stories of “looting” have created the image of Governors as those who want office for self-aggrandizement.
8. There is a pervading impression that the immunity clause is purely to shield corrupt Governors from prosecution. The ongoing altercation between the Attorney-General and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission has further re-enforced that injurious impression.
9. There is a feeling among the under-50 Nigerians that the young Governors have failed their generation, instead of making bold generational statements with their office. The impression is that Governors can perform magic and command infrastructure to emerge everywhere in their respective states even when nobody pays tax if not for corruption.

10. The struggle for power between former and current Governors has unwillingly compounded the situation. The inability to manage post-power syndrome by more than 80% of the former Governors should be of grave concern. This negative relationship has created political tension across the country and has reduced the office of Governor to a laughable situation.

Recommended Solution

1. Engage the services of professional image makers who can use very subliminal communication approach to counter the negative perception.
2. Engage in deliberate but subtle communication effort to brand, repackage and market the Governors and their programmes.
3. Provide a pool of fund that can pay for the services of engaged communication company or companies as well as pay for other direct PR efforts of the Governors' Forum.

Suggested Strategies:

A multi-dimensional approach that includes multi-media will be deployed to:

- a) Dismantle the negative perception/image of the office of Governors as an institution deliberately discredited by agencies of the Federal Government.
- b) Correct the image problem that has brought the former and serving Governors to ridicule.

- c) Restore the public rating of the Governors as agenda-setting public officials genuinely concerned with the welfare of their people.
- d) Evolve pan-Nigerian and inter-state programmes/projects that will reposition the Governors Forum as a body of a generation that makes bold generational statements through actions that unite the nation.
- e) Restore the confidence of the under-50 on the Governors.

To achieve the above, it may be necessary for the Forum to do the following among other things:

1. Court some publications as well as make some strategic investments in some. Incorporate the Lagos example of monthly publication of government programmes.
2. Immediately enter into discussion with **NDI** with a view to mounting a programme for former governors on management of post-power syndrome as they did for former African Presidents.
3. Endow at least 8 chairs in some Universities in the 36 States and Abuja.
4. Institute annual National Essay Competition and other projects with national appeal targeted at addressing the identified problems.
5. Immediate engagement/support of an independent and generally accepted institution to undertake evaluation of the performance of the present governors for general acceptability. Organization like:
 - i) Augusto and Company, FM&T Consulting, Ernest & Young, NDI, etc. may be considered.

Suggested Work Plan

1. First Quarter:
 - i) Mobilize a pool of funds.
 - ii) Identify and pitch consultants.
2. Second Quarter:
 - i) Engage and mobilize consultants.
 - ii) Consultants develop and present programmes of action.
 - iii) Programmes evaluation/review and programmes roll out.

Suggested Duration of PR Project

For maximum effect, the ideal duration of this programme should be two years in the first instance. However, we recommend a year non-stop programme.

Budget

The Forum should mobilize funds for the following areas:

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| 1. Media and strategic investments | N100m |
| 2. Endowments in at least 8 universities selected across the 6 geo-political zones at N5m per University | N40m |
| 3. National Essay Competition to be organized by the agency | N10m |
| 4. National post-graduate scholarship scheme for outstanding student for selected programs | N100m |
| 5. Monthly media expenditure/Quarterly Lagos Media briefing @ N50m per qtr for 4 quarters | N200m |
| 6. Media space (external and internal) | N100m |
| 7. Support to NDI for post-power syndrome programme | N50m |

8. Independent performance evaluation by Consultants/TV station for 36 states	N250m
9. Professional fees/Miscellaneous	<u>N200m</u>
Grand Total	<u>N1.05b</u>

Funding Suggestion

The Committee envisage a N2b pool of funds made up as follows:

- i) N5m per State
- ii) N3m payment for the month of November/State
- iii) N1m for December
- iv) N1m for January

Conclusion:

Our recommendation is based on the gains that are accruable from this project, not just for the current Governors but to sanitize and strengthen the institution of Governorship and maintain political stability for our country. The benefits for members of the Governors’ Forum are indeed enormous and we highly recommend this project.

Members of the Committee:

- 1. Governor Ikedi Ohakim (Imo State) _____
- 2. Governor Aliyu Wamako (Sokoto State) _____
- 3. Governor Sullivan Chime (Enugu State) _____