

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Governors Rollout COVID-19 Vaccines



Covid19 Vaccine As Game-changer

The year 2000, if anyone recalls the predictions and scare mongering of the past, would have shut the world down. It was the turn of the millennium and many predictions threatened our universe. Many even believed that the way we looked at time would be radically altered as the clock turned to 00 on New year day, of 2000.

One of the closest to what happened in 2020 was predicted in 1952. In the February 1952 issue of Galaxy magazine, Robert Heinlein offered his verdict on the conclusion of the twentieth century. Here are some of his predictions that I find intriguingly relevant to today's new normal, or even nearly true. Contraception and control of disease he predicted, would revise relations between the sexes to an extent that will change our entire social and economic structure. Housing shortage will be solved by a "breakthrough" into new technologies which will make every house stand as obsolete as privies. Smart homes are here. We'll all be getting a little hungry by and by. Poverty is almost becoming endemic globally leading to xenophobia and other anti-social behaviour in once known rich countries.

Freud, Heinlein predicted, will be classed as a pre-scientific, intuitive pioneer and psycho-analysis will be replaced by a growing, changing "operational psychology" based on measurement and prediction. Cancer, the common cold, and tooth decay will all be conquered; the revolutionary new problem in medical research will be to accomplish "regeneration," i.e., to enable a man to grow a new leg, rather than fit him with an artificial limb. Here is science in progress.

Some of Heinlein's predictions almost hit the bull's eye. For example, this one; Your personal telephone will be small enough to carry in your handbag. Your house telephone will record messages, answer simple inquiries, and transmit vision. Intelligent life will be found on Mars. However, when it came to foods where Heinlein's crystal ball hinted that fish and yeast will become our principal sources of proteins. Beef will be a luxury; lamb and mutton will disappear, he goofed.

Robert Heinlein immediately resurrected with this one which looked like an expression of intent on the Covid19 pandemic. He predicted that mankind will not destroy itself, nor will



"Civilization" be destroyed. This is in tandem with the year 2020 and not 2000.

Last year was the year of the doctor. The Faucis, NCDCs Ihekweazu and NGFs Dr Ahmad Abdulwahab all sprung to limelight explaining what would help ordinary folk stay alive. These are people who trusted in the triumph of science over conspiracy. They clipped the wings of the Corona Virus which held countries hostage and kept borders closed. And now just a year after the outbreak of the Corona virus, vaccines are being rolled out globally and conspiracy theorists are scampering for cover.

In the words of Dr Ahmad Abdulwahab, the NGF Health Advisor, the action of governors to subject themselves to take the vaccine in full public glare is a demonstration of faith in science, which has built public confidence in the vaccines and soon enough, he believes, Nigeria would attain herd immunity and return life to normal.

It will be uncharitable not to also credit the exemplary leadership that the NGF Chairman Dr. John Kayode Fayemi showed in this endeavor.

In this edition of the Executive Summary, we showcase the triumph of science over rumour as more than half of Nigeria's governors are shown taking the jab. Dr Ahmad called the vaccine a game-changer.

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Governor Tambuwal

Nigerian youths are capable of holding any political office – Tambuwal

In this edition of Governors Connect with the Youthful Population and Road to a Violence-Free Nigeria, Rt. Honourable Aminu Waziri Tambuwal, the Governor of Sokoto State and Vice Chairman of Nigeria Governors Forum, tasks youths on the need to embrace peace and dialogue in the quest to a functional Nigeria. He spoke to the NGF Media Team. Excerpts:

ENDSARS revolts and Covid-19 significantly defined 2020. Even though the protests were anchored on police brutality, it soon metamorphosed into the clamour against injustice, bad governance and graft. Looking back, would you say society has addressed these issues?

I would like to say that it has always been a work in progress. Some of those issues are just being addressed, therefore, it is work in progress. You know that part of what brought about the ENDSARS protests was the perceived lack of inclusion of youth in governance and they form the large population, of course. There is also the issue of police brutality and unemployment. Whether we like it or not, the lockdown also contributed to the frustration the youths were feeling at that point to the extent that they resorted to that level of campaign.

Was this a vote of no confidence on the leadership of Nigeria?

Well, not exactly that but it was more of calling the attention of the leadership to some fundamental issues that needed to be addressed. It was not necessarily a vote of no confidence but rather a wakeup call

There's been a lot of insecurity in the country, par-

ticularly the North as a result of insurgency and banditry. How safe is Sokoto State?

Well, Sokoto is not insulated from the happenings in the North-West because of the borders that we share; both local and international are artificial borders. We are virtually same people in the North-West. Also, if you move towards the Republic of Niger, you can see that Nigeriens and Nigerians on that axis are virtually the same people, speaking same language and sharing same culture. We therefore as a state cannot say we are insulated from happenings in and around Niger Republic and happenings in our neighbouring states like Zamfara.

So, if Zamfara is under attack from bandits, the resultant backlash is felt here in Sokoto quite strongly and of course, we know how it has been bad in Katsina and Niger State and even Kebbi State. All of those areas collectively constitute the epicentre of this raging banditry in the North-West, particularly, Zamfara State.

So, it is always difficult to manage such issues without having some strains of these activities taking place in our state and of course, what we are doing in Niger Republic bordering Mali and the pressure from Tripoli, Libya and the entire Sahel sub-region of Africa that have been engulfed in various arm conflicts and proliferation of light weapons.

Sokoto cannot be isolated from that, even though we are doing our best to minimise the impact of this on our people but we still get some flashes of it.

Ethnic profiling rings loud again as Nigerians crave an end to the spate of violence in the country. How can we change this mindset?

I appeal to Nigerians, my fellow compatriots to learn a lesson from other climes where ethnic profiling led to monumental bloodbath and colossal loss of human lives and property.

And the country that readily comes to mind in Africa when you talk about



ethnic profiling is Rwanda where the Hutus and Tutsis were pitched against each other and we saw what happened. This is so recent in history for us to forget so quickly. It's very fresh in our minds, so it does no one any good to embark on that kind of pathway.

It is true that we have criminals amongst virtually every tribe no matter how small that tribe is in Nigeria. So, it should be seen as criminals versus the rest of the good of society, more than ascribing a particular type of crime to a particular ethnic group. I believe that it is not in the best interest of Nigeria. We should desist from this and I appeal with every sense of leadership and humanity in us to desist from that path because it will not augur well for our country. **Just as the call for dialogue amongst stakeholders gain traction, prevalent now, is this dangerous rhetoric of fury. Everywhere, people are talking tough; just how can we achieve this dialogue then?**

I think first and foremost, we should understand that communication is key and the way you pass a message is fundamental. I was somewhere and was asked about the comment made by my brother and friend, the Governor of Ondo State about ordering a particular sect of people to vacate a particular forest within his domain.

My response was that, I think there was a problem of communication because, if the Governor had said all criminals living in so-so forest are hereby ordered to vacate the

area without mentioning a particular class of people or tribe, that could have passed without generating any controversy because in those forests, as long as they have been designated forest reserves, you are not expected to hunt, you are not expected as a herder to graze or bring your cattle to graze on that land or even farm. So, who ever does any of these in a designated forest reserve is perceived to have contravened the law or fallen under the category of those criminals that the Governor might be referring to. So, as leaders, whenever we are addressing very complex and intricate issues, we must communicate in a very clear simple language that will not generate controversy and heat up a polity like ours that is already boiling.

What's your opinion about giving bandits and kidnappers amnesty as is being canvassed in some quarters. Do you think this would end the reign of terror?

Let me begin by going back to the issue of language. Amnesty, negotiations, engagements, discussions and whatever can bring peace, for me, should be applied. Let me ask you: the Kanakara Boys: were they rescued through military might or by negotiations?

Was it not by payment of ransom?

I don't believe it was through payment of ransom because even the bandits have denied it and government too has come out to say no ransom was paid. What we were made to believe is that, there were discussions, engage-



ETHNIC PROFILING WILL NOT AUGUR WELL FOR OUR COUNTRY

ments and possibly negotiations but ultimately, no guns were used. Same also with the Kagara boys and the passengers in Niger State. It was not through a gun battle but through negotiations as well and so also with the Jengebe girls in Zamfara. So, whoever is saying these engagements are not paying off is making a very big mistake. Try engagements and in any case even if you are running a battle, there must be a window of discussion.

But can you trust these people you are negotiating with? Should we keep going in circles?

Even as we speak, I know that there are some bandits in Zamfara State and even in Sokoto state; we had discussions with them, they repented and never returned to acts of banditry. I know that as a fact and anybody can doublecheck that with the Police in Sokoto. It is documented. Even in Zamfara, two of the persons that were used to recover the Jengebe girls were repentant bandits.

Governor of Zamfara State is there to speak on these issues, so one cannot say that engagements should be completely ignored. I think the carrot and stick option should be pursued simultaneously. Those who believe they are tired and want peace or those who believe they have been converted into being better human beings should be accepted but those who believe they want to continue to terrorise us should be pursued and eliminated because they have declared war against our country. They have taken up arms against our country and so should be given the enemy treatment.

Is this why President Muhammadu Buhari recently declared that anybody seen with illegal arms should be shot at sight?

Well, it could be, but that is for Mr. President.

Some people believe that these attacks and kidnaps have continued unabated because those in authority are complicit and have monetary or political gains. Some traditional leaders have also been sanctioned and some military personnel implicated. What is your take on this?

Well, all of these are theories and, in some instances, they manifested in Zamfara State where one or two traditional chiefs were sanctioned; some of them are culpable but really, it is very callous for any leader in a position of responsibility to actually partake in this kind of very heinous crime. It actually happens where you find government officials or security personnel and

traditional leaders being involved in this thing. I believe that, even recently, the Governor of Zamfara State came out to say that there was one or two security personnel involved and that were arrested for supplying arms to bandits. There was a story of a DPO in Zamfara recently, though yet to be verified, that he was involved in discussions with bandits. So, you find some of these bad elements in some of these settings; be it traditional settings, security setting or government quarters who are so callous and unpatriotic to compromise their positions. How can they be engaging in trade-offs and transactions with criminals and bandits? This is condemnable and no leadership should tolerate it.

It seems like society rewards violence by patronising these perpetrators constantly whilst negotiating with violent people in the name of peace at all cost. Those who pursue peace are ignored. We see notorious bandits sit side by side with Governors, clutching their rifles and these photographs are proudly displayed. What's your opinion about this?

Well, I think it is essentially due to system failure and our inability to really do the right thing at the right time. If we had before now, the right security architecture, well equipped, sufficient and well-trained security personnel, then possibly we wouldn't be entering negotiations with bandits and militants. But in a situation where as a leader, you know your vantage position and



weaknesses, you need to engage these people. It is not particularly your own failing but consequences of decadence, rot of over the years; so, you are left with no option other than to engage for peace. And in any case, you have said it- it has paid off in the Niger Delta and if it has paid off in the Niger-Delta, it goes to show you that if applied properly, these engagements can actually give you rewards.

Some people believe certain interests are beginning to manipulate the media to escalate or downplay specific situations to suit their motive. Do you believe the media has been fair in their reportage of violence in Nigeria?

The issue is that these criminals crave media attention. I am not saying we should under report crime, but the more you give them these platforms, the more they feel that they have succeeded.

All I'm saying is that, as you give attention to those criminals and their activities, it is also important to project the positive steps being taken by government in countering their activities. It is important for the media to be more patriotic in its reportage of the entire situation.

What is your take on the bogus emoluments and pension packages for former Governors and their deputies? Is it something, you will recommend across board?

Well, not necessarily completely scrapping it but reviewing it reasonably. In any case, civil servants still take pensions and gratuity upon retirement. So, if you are saying that those who serve in that level in the state or even the country should not be remunerated, then I think you are not getting it right. It should be reviewed drastically, though to the level that government can comfortably accommodate.

This brings me to the issue of all-inclusiveness. What is Governor Tambuwal doing to carry everyone along?

We are not only speaking on the issue of all-inclusiveness in Sokoto State but we are actually practicing it. In terms of appointment, more than ever before, we now have more than eight Directors-General and two Permanent Secretaries that are females and members of the Executive Councils that are females too. Really, never ever in the history of Sokoto State did we have the number of females in our bureaucracy like we do now. We are going to go into local government elections, and we appointed three councillors for each of the local government areas of the state into caretaker committees. That is not less than 69 female councillors.

This is to ensure more participation of women and they are in boards

and various leaders of parastatals across the state, including our macro finance bank which is being headed by Turai Nadama. When you talk about youth, we appointed the youngest commissioner in the country recently named Bashir Guro as Commissioner in charge of youth and sports. We also have a number of them as advisers.

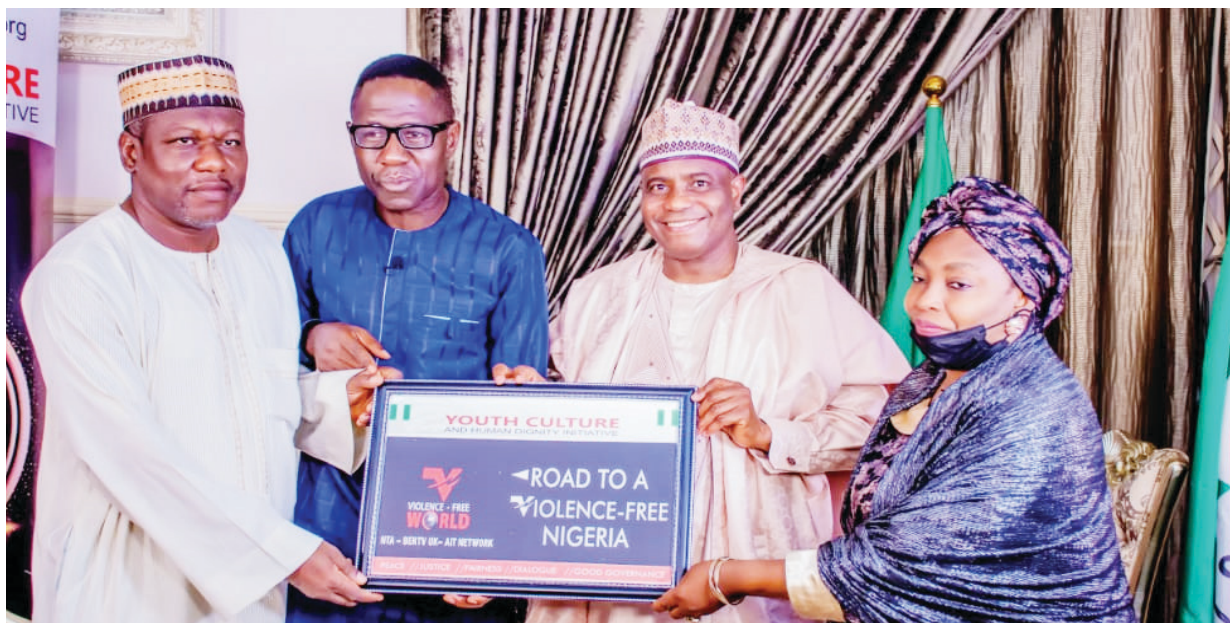
The youths of Nigeria have continued to complain about the state of affairs in the country. As 2023 beckons, if you get the opportunity to gun for the highest office, how and why do you think the youth should trust that you can bring anything new to the table?

I believe that the young people of Nigeria should look at how some of us who have been given the opportunity of leadership have been able to bring

them on board, working with them, mentoring them and giving them tasks and challenging them. They can now assess whether we are actually in a position to continue to provide that kind of leadership for them should we find ourselves in higher positions. And let me speak to the issue of financial inclusion of youth and women in Sokoto State. I believe that we have so many intelligent young men and women in Nigeria that have the capacity to take on any assignment they are given. It's just for them to be identified and placed in the right places and they will perform wonders.

What's your general advice to the youths, especially as it concerns violence and the pandemic?

Covid-19 is here with us and it is the new norm. It has changed our lives, in terms of economic engagement and our endeavours. It is important we adhere and observe all of the protocols and keep safe. I must also at this point appeal to the youth of Nigeria that violence is not the way. It is always better to identify a model in whatever is your chosen profession. Identify that model, read the history of that model, avoid the pitfalls and improve on the lessons of that model and learn how he or she succeeded. I believe it is important for our youth to learn more, study more, avoid drugs and bad company. Learn more from those who have succeeded and relate less with those who have failed in their fields.



Governor Tambuwal of Sokoto State in a profile picture with the Publications Officer of the NGF Hajia Halima Ahmed and two others



What Governors' Wives Do Against Gender Based Violence

B i s i A d e l e - eye-Fayemi, first Lady from Ekiti State

HE Erelu Bisi Fayemi is a Gender Specialist and Policy Advocate. She has used her office to advocate for laws and policies in Ekiti State: The Gender Based Violence Prohibition Law (2011), Ekiti State Gender Policy (2011) the Gender and Equal Opportunities Law (2013) and the HIV Anti-Stigma Law (2014). She is currently involved in the following advocacy initiatives.

Implementation of the GBV Law of 2011: As Chair of the Management Committee for the implementation of the GBV Law, HE is dedicated to ensuring that this very important legislation continues to protect vulnerable citizens from all forms of violence and abuse.

Gender and Vulnerable Persons Unit (GVPU): With the support of the Ministry of Justice, Ekiti State, there is a GVPU based in the office of HE, coordinated by a Lawyer and a team of dedicated volunteers who help citizens in distress (mostly women but not exclusively) through timely interventions.

HIV/AIDS Awareness: As Chair of the Ekiti State AIDS Control Agency (EKSA-CA) HE lends her voice to HIV Awareness, prevention and treatment efforts in Ekiti State.

Keep Girls in School Campaign: This new advocacy initiative of HE Erelu Bisi Fayemi is aimed at creating awareness and mobilizing resources to ensure that girls stay in school for as long as possible.

Anti-Female Genital Mutilation: HE is currently involved in activities to remove Ekiti State from the list of States with a high prevalence of Female Genital Mutilation. Using a combination of community sensitization, awareness raising and economic empowerment activities, HE provides sup-

port to the Ekiti State FGM Task Force.

Cancer Prevention and Healthy Living: HE is a passionate advocate for cancer prevention and healthy living, using her various networks and platforms to promote these issues wherever she goes, as well as organizing regular screenings for women. In October 2013, HE's Ekiti Development Foundation worked with the Ekiti State Government to establish the Funmilayo Olayinka Diagnostic and Well-Being Centre at the Ekiti State Teaching Hospital.

Mrs. Folake Abdulrazaq of Kwara State

The First Lady Mrs. Olufolake AbdulRazaq intervened as a mother to ensure the passage of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Bill.

She is the founder of Ajike People Support Centre. The Centre is an initiative of the First Lady of Kwara, aimed at improving the wellbeing of women, youth and children through Advocacy and Community Development.

In Kwara, a little girl that was just three and a half years old was brought to her. She was allegedly assaulted by a 60-year-old man.

It took the intervention of her office and the Ministry of Women Affairs in Kwara State to make the per-

petrator face the full wrath of the law.

She also took care of 1000 indigent women by training them in skills acquisition programmes such as tie-dye, face screen, make-up, batik production, shoe making and purses. The women they trained now train other people and make a living from it.

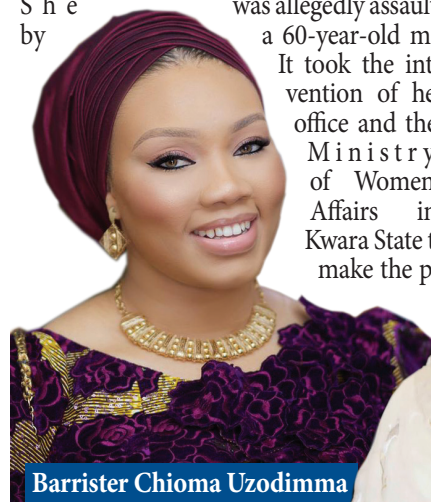
She has partnered with many groups

such as Educated Women in Politics, Ajike Peoples Support Group, Folake Forum and many others.

As an advocate for gender-based issues, she talks to other women and seeks strategic means to avert any form of violence among women. They encourage them to learn how to speak out and become bold and don't think of the stigma and to seek counsel. They also collaborate with other NGOs to achieve this.



Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi



Barrister Chioma Uzodimma



Mrs. Folake Abdulrazaq

Her Excellency, Barrister Chioma Uzodimma from Imo State

The first lady of Imo State, Barrister Chioma Uzodimman actively works towards causes against gender-based violence and abuse.

There was a case where a lady: Nkechi Ezinma was raped and had triplets so they took her in. She was later discharged from the hospital.

They then took a step further by asking her what she wants to do and empowering her to lend a



Mrs Hadiza El-Rufai



Chief Rachel Umahi



Mrs. Edith Okowa

voice to help out.

They plan to have a hearing to domesticate the VAPP act in the state. They are also working on having a sexual referral centre adopted in three zones in their state.

The civil societies, NGOs and police officers

SHE FED THOUSANDS OF PRISONERS AND SECURED RELEASE OF MANY WITH MINOR OFFENSES THROUGH PAYMENT OF OPTION OF FINES, EMPOWERED VULNERABLE WOMEN WITH FINANCIAL SUCCOUR AND OTHER MATERIAL CARE, SET UP ORPHANAGES AND PROVIDED SKILL ACQUISITION SCHEMES FOR UNEMPLOYED YOUTHS AND THE LESS PRIVILEGED

have been supportive. The governors have promised to help in the efforts financially and every other way even in the VAPP act.

Mrs Hadiza El-Rufai - Kaduna State

The First Lady of Kaduna State, Mrs Hadiza El-Rufai actively works towards cases against gender-based violence and abuse in her state.

She engaged a campaign against rape and gender-based violence in Turunku, the headquarters of Igabi Local Government Area of Kaduna State while she decried the surge in rape of minors.

The campaign hashtag was called #ummielrufaisgbvchallenge!

Chief Rachel Umahi - (Ebonyi State)

The First Lady of Ebonyi State, Rachel Umahi led a campaign against female genital mutilation under the umbrella of her pet project, Family Succour and Upliftment Programme in the State.

She has been honored by Society for Family Health as the SFH Child Survival Ambassador for Ebonyi State. This is in recognition to her personal commitment towards improving maternal and child health in the state.

The honor was conferred to her on July 5, 2016 in Abakailiki, at the formal launch of the state campaign against Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C).

As SFH Child Survival Ambassador, Chief Mrs Umahi is expected to utilize her office as wife of Ebonyi State Governor to:

-Champion advocacy in support of innovative

interventions that promote children's health, such as prevention and effective management-of malaria, diarrhea and pneumonia, access to clean water, the practice of exclusive breast feeding, eradication of harmful cultural practices like female genital mutilation and child marriage.

-Lead mobilization of community support and acceptance of innovative interventions on children's health.

-Support improving child health programming in Ebonyi state.

Mrs. Edith Okowa, First Lady of Delta State

The First Lady of Delta State, Mrs. Edith Okowa led the 05 initiative. This has rolled forward visible impact and serious acclaim since its establishment in 2015. She has donated over 15 sickle cell clinics established by the 05 Initiative to the Delta state government, located at Asaba, Oleh, Orerokpe, Patani, Ughelli, Umunede, Sapele, Kwale, Eku, Koko, Otu-Jeremi, Agbor and Issele-Uku among others. She recently built a special sickle cell centre equipped with Newborn Screening equipment for the treatment of sickle cell anaemia in Asaba.

She fed thousands of prisoners and secured release of many with minor offenses through payment of option of fines, empowered vulnerable women with financial succour and other material care, set up orphanages and provided skill acquisition schemes for unemployed youths and the less privileged.

In addition, she spoke to advocates under the umbrella of Delta State Coalition Against Gen-



Mrs Bamidele Abiodun



Betty Anyanwu Akeredolu



Eunice Ortom

der-Based Violence, the First Lady said so much needs to be done to eliminate the scourge of sexual violence in the state and country at large.

She has charged women and girls to break loose from traditional silence and speak up when they are sexually abused or witness an act of gender molestation, violence, within their community.

Through her support, the State Governor, Dr Ifeanyi Okowa and the State Attorney General, Barr Peter Mrakpor saw through the passage of the VAPP law which she said will rip the state of violators of the law.

Eunice Ortom- First Lady of Benue State

As part of her activities to mark the closing ceremony of the year 2020 #16daysofactivism against Gender-Based Violence, GBV, the First Lady of Benue State, Dr Eunice Ortom led participants in an awareness walk in Makurdi, the Benue State capital.

Speaking at the dissemination meeting, Mrs Ortom cautioned that the people must not take the end of the #16daysofactivism period as the end of the fight against GBV.

She said, "This is rather the time to build on the observations and experiences of the period in order to be more determined and committed to ending GBV in Benue State."

Mrs Bamidele Abiodun- Ogun State

Mrs. Bamidele Abiodun, Wife of Ogun State Governor, Mrs. Bamidele Abiodun has vowed to ensure that the law to protect women and the girl-child against gender-based violence works effectively, to bring offenders to justice and provide protection for survivors.

Mrs. Abiodun stated this at a program organized by the Office of the First Lady in conjunction with Women at Risk Foundation (WARIF) for 200 secondary school girls and 20 teachers each

from the four divisions of the State, noting that all efforts taken on the issue were meant to ensure that the perpetrators of the crime do not go unpunished and the victims could take the necessary steps to recover and hopefully have a future free of stigmatisation.

She said with continuing advocacy and collective efforts of all and sundry, there would be a significant decline in the case being witnessed in the country, promising not to relent in deploying necessary resources to empower the vulnerable ones in the society.

"We are to win the fight against gender-based violence, it is not enough to just speak about it, we must also empower those who are more vulnerable. And the first step to empowerment is knowledge. And so, we will not relent in our efforts across Ogun State, to deploy all the resources necessary to empower our people to protect themselves", she said.

Mrs. Abiodun said, the Governor, Prince Dapo



IF WE ARE TO WIN THE FIGHT AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE, IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO JUST SPEAK ABOUT IT, WE MUST ALSO EMPOWER THOSE WHO ARE MORE VULNERABLE. AND THE FIRST STEP TO EMPOWERMENT IS KNOWLEDGE

Abiodun has put measures in place to ensure that gender-based violence issues were addressed as a matter of priority.

"We also have a family support unit (FSU), spearheaded by the Ogun State Police Command, which we hope to establish in different parts of the State. The FSU is a safe place for everyone no matter how young or old, where they can come forward and speak up without fear

"I want to also say that we might be tempted to believe that everyone has heard, or that potential offenders have heeded the warnings from law enforcement agencies on the issue of gender-based violence. This is not the case because sadly, many incidents remain unreported. Many of the victims are either threatened or ashamed to speak out for fear of being stigmatized", Mrs. Abiodun said.

Betty Anyanwu Akeredolu: First Lady of Ondo State

Ondo State Governor's wife, Mrs Betty Anyanwu-Akeredolu is driving gender equality and women empowerment through one of her pet projects, Forum for Wives of Ondo State Officials and Female Political Appointees (FOWOSO).

FOWOSO reached out to no less than 1,800 women in the 18 local government areas of the state, imparted life changing and empowerment skills such as shoemaking, fashion design, make-over, tying of headgear (gele), bead making, and catering craft, among other numerous skills acquisition programmes.

Her pet project continues to fight the belief that development can happen when women are restricted to kitchen duties, child rearing, and a complete dependence on their husbands for their every need.

Besides the skill acquisition, FOWOSO has also impacted the lives of women through the

provision of empowerment items to improve the productivity of local businesses.

Another advocacy being championed by FOWOSO is the fight against rape in Ondo. In July 2019, FOWOSO successfully made a strong stand against rape by organising a “walk against rape” to address the increased incidence of rape in the state, some of which were even perpetuated by men in uniform.

Nkechi Ikpeazu: First Lady of Governor of Abia State

Wife of the Governor of Abia State, Dr. Mrs Nkechi Ikpeazu held a meeting with the Wives of the new Local Government Chairmen in Abia State.

One major focus of the meeting was how the wives of Local Government chairmen can get involved in the campaign to end all forms of Gender-Based Violence especially Violence Against Women and Girls.

Addressing her guests, the wife of the Governor, Mrs. Ikpeazu described wives of the new Local Government Chairmen as critical stakeholders and tasked them to begin institutionalizing Incidence Reporting Office (IROs) in their various Local Governments Areas so that victims and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in local communities can get help and access to medical treatment and justice system.

She directed them to create a network of community responders including Community-Based Organizations, Faith Based Organizations, Traditional Leaders, Youth and Women Groups and other relevant stakeholders.

Mrs. Ikpeazu said it is imperative to sustain a robust grassroots movement to end GBV by

creating local community response and support structures, led by local actors and responders, will function with the state response guidelines and work closely with the State Action Committee on GBV which she is Chair of.

The meeting featured to capacity-building lectures presented by the State Chairman of International Federation of women Lawyers, Mrs. Akudo Amanamba and the Response Lead of the State Gender Based Violence Action Committee, Mr. Raymond Ukwa.

In their various responses, the Wives of LGA Chairmen eulogized Dr. Mrs. Nkechi Ikpeazu over what she had done in the area of free school meal, housing for indigent, sickle cell disease eradication, gender-based violence and abuse, and expressed commitment to begin this advocacy from their husbands and get them to appoint GBV Response officers in the Local Government Areas and create referral structures to give victims of abuse access to care and justice.

Meanwhile, the wife of the Governor has inspected new facilities and office spaces of the Abia State Gender Based Violence - GBV- Resource Centre that will serve as workspace for responders, researchers, data analyzers and for technical planning of GBV programming, with a charge to members of the GBV Action Committee to approach their assignments diligently. She said expectations are quite high and that she is optimistic that a lot will be achieved through the Centre.

Kafayat Oyetola- Osun State Governor

Osun State has a Gender-Based Management Committee of the State. The Committee is chaired by the Wife of the Governor, Mrs Kafayat Oyetola

The wife of the Governor, Mrs. Kafayat Oyetola, said women and children constitute major part of the world population and deserve to be treated as important, adding that the wellbeing of women is important to the development of society.

She thanked Mr. Governor for keeping his promise of supporting the fight against GBV, which culminated in the inauguration of the Committee.

She said the administration has also supported through provision of women and children clinics which would be found useful by the newly inaugurated Committee, adding that efforts would be intensified to rally support for the committee to enable it execute its terms of reference successfully.

In addition, the Osun Government says it has started training women and children on martial arts as the first line of self-defence against attacks and to curb gender-based violence in the state.

The Commissioner for Women, Children and Social Affairs, Olubukola Olaboopo, made the disclosure in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) on Wednesday in Osogbo.

Mrs Olaboopo said the ministry was centrally handling rape and violence against women cases, in partnership with the Police and Ministry of Justice so that victims could get justice and offenders do not go unpunished.

“We have a law that prohibits domestic violence and we are, as much as possible, ensuring that our women experience, if not zero level violence, at least to the barest minimum.

Mrs Olaboopo said she and other concerned women in the state, led by the wife of the governor, Kafayat Oyetola, had gone to the state House of Assembly to push for a review of gender-based laws.

She said they had also met with the Chief Justice and other female judges, including the Police Commissioner to ensure that women and chil-



Nkechi Ikpeazu

WE HAVE A LAW THAT PROHIBITS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND WE ARE, AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, ENSURING THAT OUR WOMEN EXPERIENCE, IF NOT ZERO LEVEL VIOLENCE, AT LEAST TO THE BAREST MINIMUM



Kafayat Oyetola



dren were protected and get justice in cases of violation against them.

Dr. Zainab Shinkafi-Bagudu - (Kebbi State)

Dr Zainab Shinkafi Bagudu, the wife of the Kebbi State Governor, has expressed support and commitment to the cause of ending rape and gender-based violence in her state.

Bagudu gave the assurance while participating in a webinar titled "Mobilizing Actions against Rape and Sexual Abuse."

They shared experiences and assessed the current situation with a view to creating a roadmap towards ending rape and gender-based violence in Kebbi State.

She assured the stakeholders of Senator Atiku Abubakar Bagudu's readiness to support the cause through signing and implementation of relevant laws.

"The VAPP Act was the last Act passed during the administration of former President Goodluck Jonathan and it came through concerted efforts and support of my husband when he was a legislator.

Her Excellency is also a Pediatric Consultant, a loud voice in the fight against cancer and a child's right advocate.

Her advocacy for women, children and the youth in Kebbi state and Northern Nigeria, cuts across health, education and skills acquisition.

As well as being the Chief Executive of Medicaid, Dr Zainab Bagudu is the founder of Medicaid Cancer Foundation (MCF), which creates awareness and funds diagnosis, and treatment of the common cancers in Nigeria. MCF has become quite famous for holding an annual one million-walk away cancer fundraiser.

She has raised over N120m for treatment and support for cancer patients.

Martha Udom- First Lady of Akwa Ibom State

Through the instrumentality of her nationally acclaimed Pet Project: Family Empowerment and Youth Re-orientation Path Initiative (FEYReP), Dr. Martha Udom Emmanuel has brought a new layer of engagement associated with the office of the First Lady of Akwa Ibom State.

Through the "Martha Care for Young Girls" programme under FEYReP, she has provided sexual education to young girls who may otherwise have become vulnerable to early pregnancy and instil in them a sense of self dignity.

The "Martha Care for Young Girls" is a platform where young girls are taught sex education with the view to making them self-aware and to say no to unsolicited sexual advances by men.

FEYReP has partnered with United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to set up a GBV call



Dr. Zainab Shinkafi-Bagudu



Martha Udom



Aisha Bello Matawalle

centre in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State capital where victims are attended to on-the-go. According to the governor's wife, "We cannot continue to condone the stigma and culture of silence that allows such acts to go unabated and perpetrators to go unpunished."

Her "Shelter of Hope" programme has helped build over 30 houses for widows and other economically disadvantaged men and women.

Fondly called "Eka Unwana," (a Mother who has brought sunshine of hope and fulfillment) she has received several recognitions, honors and awards from both National and International organizations such as the 'Heart of Champion' award from the International Human Rights Commission- New York, an 'Africans Impact Leadership' award from Center for Economic and Leadership Development in Paris, the Number One Nutrition Champion award from UNICEF, Cultural Ambassador by National Association of Nigerian Theatre Arts Practitioners, Environment Friendly First Lady in Nigeria by the Nigerian Chapter for Conservation Biology (NSCB) University of Uyo, Award of Excellence in Women Development by the Akwa Ibom State University Women Association (AKSUWA), to mention just a few.

Haj Lami Ahmadu Umaru Fintiri: First Lady Adamawa State

The First Lady of Adamawa State, Hajiya Lami Ahmadu Umaru Fintiri has appealed to Stakeholders, Religious leader, Traditional rulers and all the good citizens of the State to Support the fight towards ending violence against Children and Women as they Mark the 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER BASED VIOLENCE GBV "Orange the world."

Zamfara First Lady- Aisha Bello Matawalle

The First Lady's Maternal and Child Care Health program is one of her topmost priorities looking at the high indices in maternal mortality of the state. Her free maternal delivery kits tagged as 'Mama kit' for pregnant women is one of the programs under her Maternal and Child Care initiative.

She has distributed 10,000 kits across the 14 local Government Areas in Zamfara state. The Mama Kit bag contains unisex baby clothing, Ankara clothing for Mother, Pampers, sanitary pad, baby skin care products (Lotion, oil, Soap, Powder, petroleum jelly), for use after child birth.

The First Lady has always been at the fore-front in the campaign against Gender Based Violence. She is an active member of the Nigerian Governors Wives against Gender Based Violence Forum. She is currently championing the adoption of the Child Rights Act, which due to her influ-



ence, the state government have already commenced the review of the draft document with all the relevant stakeholders for speedy approval.

The VAPP Act with other relevant laws are amongst the document that are currently in the state House of Assembly.

The First Lady has implemented activities in commemoration of the 16 days of activism which include:

-Flag off of the 16 days of Activism in support and solidarity with the First Lady's Initiatives on ending Gender Based Violence by the Executive Governor of the State, Dr. Bello Muhammad Matawalle.

-The inauguration of the Gender Based violence committee which was conducted by the Executive Governor. The committee comprises of all the relevant stakeholders that will push for the change towards ending violence against women and children. The First Lady is chairing the committee while the permanent Secretary of the Ministry for Women Affairs is the secretary of the committee.

-A road walk on the campaign for ending violence against women and Children was conducted with the Executive Governor

of the State.

-Meeting with relevant stakeholders on the collation of a consolidated GBV data from the relevant stakeholders.

-Media Enlightenment Campaign on GBV through the production and airing of radio and television jingles, songs and dramas.

-Sensitization sessions on prevention and reporting of GBV cases was conducted for 300 school children across primary and secondary schools.

-Implementation of 2 days Conversation Café for 100 boys and awareness creation project for 100 girls as part of behavioural change communication strategy towards the Fight against GBV in collaboration with Women at risk Foundation (WARIF).

-Distribution of flyers, and use of the

ku and first female Nigerian ambassador to Malaysia, Dr. Hajara Ibrahim Salim from Gombe as well. They are our role models and mentors in the development of women and girl - child for a better future,"said the first lady.

Hajiya Asma'u Yahaya pointed out that, Gombe State Government under the leadership of her husband, Muhammad Inuwa Yahaya is a clear demonstration of women inclusion in governance with eleven female counsellors, one each from the eleven local government areas of the State, a situation that has never been experienced before. This is in addition to the 3 female commissioners and 1 chairperson of Billiri local government.

Therefore, just as we reckon with these great achievers, the Gombe State First Lady called on all women to be their SISTER'S KEEPERS and shun all forms of GENDER - BASED VIOLENCE and DISCRIMINATION especially with the recent trauma experienced by the increase in women and girls kidnapping.

Finally, as women and great assets for social change and national development, it is time for more collaboration and concerted efforts to support each other in all fields of endeavor and stand out amidst COVID-19 pandemic.

Haj. Silifat Abdullahi A. Sule of Nasarawa State



Haj. Asma'u Inuwa Yahaya

Mrs. Betsy Obaseki

Haj. Silifat Abdullahi A. Sule

**THE COMMITTEE
COMPRISES OF ALL THE
RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS
THAT WILL PUSH FOR
THE CHANGE TOWARDS
ENDING VIOLENCE
AGAINST WOMEN AND
CHILDREN**

posters on GBV Campaign was conducted by the Office of the First Lady.

Haj. Asma'u Inuwa Yahaya - Gombe State

The wife of Gombe State Governor, Asma'u Muhammad Inuwa Yahaya joined the rest of the world in celebrating INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY with the THEME: WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP; ACHIEVING AN EQUAL FUTURE IN COVID-19 WORLD.

The governor's wife emphasized the need to celebrate women's achievements everyday considering their roles in home management and governance, here in Nigeria and the diaspora.

"Gombe State has produced the first ever Nigerian and African female UN Deputy Secretary General, Amina Mohammed, first Gombe State female minister of education, Aishatu Jibir Duk-

Nasarawa state First Lady, Hajiya Silifat Abdullahi Sule stressed the need for the public to participate in the fight against Gender-Based Violence in her state.

According to the First Lady, it is a collective responsibility that can only be achieved if the public maintains a united front, considering the rate at which the scourge spreads.

Hajiya Silifat reiterated this shortly after she was conferred with the position of Matron of the Federation of Women Lawyers, Nasarawa State chapter.

The First Lady, while receiving delegation of the prestigious association in her office, thanked the organization for recognizing and honoring her with the position.

She pledged her support to the association in every way possible for it to succeed as it stands



Dr. Amina Abubakar Bello

against violation of the rights of women and the girl-child.

Chairperson of the association and leader of the delegation, Justina Alkali Allu, said they were at the Government House to intimate the First Lady on their proposed activities as part of the 16 days of activism against Gender-Based Violence.

Allu, while noting the numerous support and contributions the first has done so far through her Foundation, Silifat Abdullahi Sule (SAS) Foundation, in the fight against gender-based violence, solicited the support of the First Lady to enable them engage and train Paralegals at the Local Governments level in other to curtail violent acts as rape, early and forceful marriages as well as molestation of women and girls.

High point of the visit was cash donation to the association by the First Lady.

Mrs. Betsy Obaseki, first lady from Edo State

Wife of the governor of Edo State, Betsy Obaseki has advocated for more potent laws to protect the girl-child in the face of rising incidence of rape and sexual abuse in the country.

Obaseki said she was also working with wives of other governors to ensure the implementation of tougher laws to punish perpetrators of all forms of gender-based violence.

She stated this while addressing members of Edo Women Development Initiative (EWDI) and Women's Aid Collective (WACOL), during a peaceful protest to the Government House in Benin.

Obaseki assured the non-governmental organisations that governors' wives were working together with Nigeria's First Lady, Aisha Buhari, to address all forms of gender-based violence.

"We have also realised that rapists kill their victims; it is as a result of this that we, as governors' wives, set up the Gender Violence Committee. We are working round the clock to ensure violence against women and children is stamped out. We recently came up with a communiqué to the Nigeria Governors' Forum and the forum adopted our communiqué, which made them declare a state of emergency on gender-based violence in the country," she said.

Noting that a target has been set to reduce the incidence of gender-based violence to the barest minimum, she said, "Edo State is in the forefront of these efforts. We will do as much as we can to bring this scourge to its barest minimum. That is our primary goal. We are going to sustain the protests on a monthly basis until we are sure that there is a drastic reduction in sexual violence in our society."

Dr. Amina Abubakar Bello of Niger State

Dr Amina Abubakar Bello is the founder of a pet project: RAISE Foundation. RAiSE Foundation is a Non – Governmental, Not for Profit sustainable organization that focuses on the improvement in Maternal and Child Health; Women Empowerment and Girl Child Education.

It was established to raise awareness and spur affirmation on issues affecting the survival and growth of women and the girl child.

They are involved in advocacy to improve Reproductive health rights and awareness campaigns to improve Maternal Health and Child Health.

Some of their interventions are in Maternal, Child Health, Women Empowerment and Girl Child Education.

As it relates to women empowerment, RAiSE Foundation is centered on demand driven aspect of Women Empowerment. Outside the home, women have limited access to resources, they are under – represented in public and policy making organizations. They seek to empower women to participate fully.

RAiSE Foundation also has a cancer screening centre as an intervention. The centre accommodates facilities for Mammography, Breast scans and clinical breast examination. All services are free.

Mrs Ebelechukwu Vickie Obiano from Anambra State

The Wife of the Governor of Anambra State, and founder of Caring Family Enhancement Initiative (CAFE), Dr. Mrs. Ebelechukwu Obiano (Osodieme), has stated that the fight against gender-based violence demands the commitment and sacrifice of all persons, from the government to the religious and the community leaders.

CAFÉ was founded in August 2014 by the Wife of the Governor of Anambra State, Her Excellency, Chief (Mrs.) Ebelechukwu Obiano (Osodieme), in furtherance of her passion for helping the needy.

She created CAFE Initiative with the mandate to care for the less privileged and reduce women-child vulnerability while maintaining the dignity of physically challenged persons.

CAFÉ has so far trained and empowered over 4350 Anambra women, widows and youths in various skills. The CAFÉ concept involves regular training of participants with direct resource and/or in collaboration with genuine organizations with Man-power development capabilities in the chosen areas of interest free-of- charge.

The areas of intervention include: Tailoring and Fashion design, Soap making, Bakery and

WE ARE GOING TO SUSTAIN THE PROTESTS ON A MONTHLY BASIS UNTIL WE ARE SURE THAT THERE IS A DRASTIC REDUCTION IN SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN OUR SOCIETY



Confectionery, Hair dressing and Beauty Therapy, and Interior Decoration, Telephone and Computer repairs amongst other programmes. On graduation, beneficiaries receive free equipment in their chosen trade and start-up capital.

Aisha Bala Mohammed from Bauchi State

Wife of Bauchi State Governor, Hajiya Aisha Bala Mohammed said to curb rape and other violence against women in the state, the state government has set up a committee against sexual and gender-based violence.

Speaking at the inauguration of the state office of the National Council of Women Society (NCWS) in Bauchi, Hajiya Mohammed informed that the committee was set up as a result of the government's concern of the plights of women.

While commending stakeholders in the state for ensuring the domestication of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Law, the wife of the governor informed that the committee against sexual and gender-based violence was set up to enforce the law.

She informed that so far, the committee had achieved a lot in the area of enlightenment on the evils of sexual and gender-based violence in the state.

Hajiya (Dr) Aisha Bala Mohammed is also the Founder of Al-Muhibbah Foundation. Through this NGO, Hajiya Aishatu Bala Mohammed has been able to formalise her dreams and aspiration of helping the vulnerable and less privileged.

The beneficiaries of this scheme are the skilled or trained physically challenged persons and the less privileged among us in the society.

Through her fund, she also provides start-up capital to assist skilled people to initiate small scale businesses.

Tamunominini Makinde from Oyo State

Wife of Oyo State Governor, Tamunominini Olufunke Makinde and chairperson of the University of Ibadan

Women Society, who is also the wife of the Vice-Chancellor, Dr. (Mrs.) Wumi Olayinka, have declared war on gender-based violence in the state.

Mrs. Makinde made this known while receiving the chairperson of the UIWS in her office located near the Government House, Agodi, Ibadan on Tuesday.

She stated that there was the need to promote women empowerment and emancipation as an avenue for

engendering peaceful coexistence in the society.

The governor's wife said that her office had been working assiduously to end rape and gender-based violence in the state.

She added that the office had been adopting proactive measures while putting in place the right structures to prevent the occurrence of negative/anti-women vices.

The UIWS, a non-governmental organisation's core values includes a focus on empowerment of women and exploration of the value change in agro-impact products through training in areas such as planting, preservation, processing, marketing and fund-sourcing.

Mrs. Makinde also commended the association for the work it has been doing in the area of women empowerment, and the campaign against gender-based violence, adding that the government of Oyo State under the leadership of her husband would be willing to work with the association, especially in the area of empowering rural women.

Mrs. Makinde further stated that her major concern at the moment was how to end rape and gender-based violence, by putting the right and proactive structures in place.

She said, "One of my key concerns right now is how to end rape and gender-based violence, and like your approach, which is not just to talk about it, not just to prevent it, but also to be proactive in providing something substantial that can go a long way to mitigate the problems on the table.

"This is something which most people do not look at. What they look at is they shout and say 'catch the rapists.' But how do we put structures in place, so that we can stop rape from happening?"

"So, that is one of the things that I like, which you have taken the bold step to build, even if it is just a domestic facility that will accommodate 20 people.

"Those people who can benefit from such a facility will, in the future, contribute to another new space by keying into your ideas. I think for me, it is a very good thing to look at."

The chairperson of the UIWS, Dr. (Mrs.) Olayinka had told the First Lady that the Society was seeking ways of partnering with the Office of the Wife of the Oyo State Governor on agro-impact projects and empowerment initiatives to enhance the social status of women and youths in the state.



Aisha Bala Mohammed



Tamunominini Makinde



27TH NGF COMMUNIQUE

ISSUED AT THE END OF THE 27TH EMERGENCY TELECONFERENCE MEETING OF THE NIGERIA GOVERNORS' FORUM (4TH IN 2021) HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 4TH MARCH 2021.

We, members of the Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF) at our emergency meeting held today, deliberated on the administration of the first batch of the COVAX AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine which was received by the government of Nigeria on 2nd March 2021.

1. The Forum received briefing from the Executive Secretary of the National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHC-DA), Dr. Faisal Shuaib in the company of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF) and Chairman of the Presidential Tax Force (PTF) on COVID-19, Boss Mustapha, on the vaccine roll-out plan for the country.

2. The meeting also received updates and remarks on the planned vaccination exercise from the Minister of Health, Dr. Osagie Ehanire; the Director General of the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), Dr. Chikwe Ihekweazu, and members of the Forum's COVID-19 Technical Advisory Group led by Professor Oyewale Tomori.

3. Nigeria received 3.9 million doses of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine as part of the COVAX facility arrangement with the government of Nigeria. The administration of the vaccine in the country will begin on the 5th of March 2021 at the National Hospital with front line health workers who have been the highest at risk of contracting the virus.

4. Following extensive discussions on the vaccine administration, Governors called on the Federal Government to take necessary steps to support logistics and inoculation activities in States and resolved to take the following actions to ensure a smooth vaccine roll-out exercise across the country:

i. Initiate the launch of the vaccination programme in all States from 10th March 2021;

ii. Ensure strict compliance and prioritization of the list of eligible persons to be vaccinated starting with all frontline workers, support staff, COVID-19 rapid response teams, workers in lab networks, isolation and treatment centres as well as tertiary and specialist hospitals. Strategic leaders will also

be vaccinated to give confidence to the public on the safety of the vaccine. The second phase will prioritize older adults (50 and above) while the 3rd and 4th phases will focus on adults (18 – 49) with co-morbidities such as hypertension, diabetes, lung disease, and other health conditions; and adults (18 – 49 years) without any underlying health condition and the rest of the population;

iii. Actively monitor vaccine administration in their States through a vaccine implementation dashboard; iv. Facilitate the timely release of counterpart funds from State governments to ensure the vaccine roll-out exercise runs smoothly; Upscale all vaccine communication and advocacy mechanisms already in place in States to reduce the level of vaccination hesitancy amongst Nigerians;

vi. Provide adequate security to all State and local government-owned cold stores that will be used for storing the vaccine.

Governor Kayode Fayemi
Chairman, Nigeria Governors' Forum
4th March 2021.



28TH NGF COMMUNIQUE

ISSUED AT THE END OF THE 28TH EMERGENCY TELECONFERENCE MEETING OF THE NIGERIA GOVERNORS' FORUM (5TH IN 2021) HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 17TH MARCH 2021.

Members of the Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF), at our meeting held today, deliberated on issues affecting the country, particularly on the roll out of the Covid19 vaccines and the attendant issues that have arisen since the roll out. The chairman congratulated his colleagues for accepting to be vaccinated and declared that so far the vaccines have not shown any signs of side-effects as is widely rumored. The Chairman also briefed his colleagues on the visit of the Committee of Vice Chancellors of States' Universities, the activities of the Governors Spouses around Gender-Based Violence and the VAP Act calling on his colleagues to step up to the plate in support of the activities of the Nigerian Governors' Wives Forum nationwide and the progress made with the States' Fiscal Transparency, Accountability and Sustainability (SFTAS) project.

After the briefing by the Chairman:

1. The Forum received a presentation from the British Deputy High Commissioner (DHC) in Lagos, Nigeria, Ben Llewellyn-Jones, on the Accelerated C-19 Economic Support (ACES) programme which is aimed at supporting Nigeria's response to the COVID-19 crisis. The current focus of the ACES programme in Nigeria is trade facilitation through e-customs and digital jobs booster to activate the digital economy and accelerate the creation of local tech jobs in the country.

2. Following the presentation, the Forum committed to supporting a federal government-led cross-agency trade facilitation as a critical objective of the e-customs programme coordinated through the National Trade Facilitation Roadmap. Nigeria will be able to achieve the objectives of the e-customs programme (i.e., enhanced user experience, and approximately 10% growth in customs revenue to hit the US\$176 billion revenue target) with a broader cross-agency scope of reform including fulfilling its World Trade Organisation (WTO) trade facilitation agreement.

3. Members also committed to encouraging digital infrastructure expansion, accelerator programmes and investment promotion to facilitate job creation in highly potential



Governor El-Rufai



Governor Sanwolu

digital areas such as IT and business processing outsourcing, digital media, e-commerce, start-up innovation and smart manufacturing based on the comparative advantage of each State. In the light of this, State governments are encouraged to setup one-stop shops to accelerate approvals and harmonize fees for priority broadband infrastructure across the country.

4. Furthermore, the NGF Secretariat will partner with the British High Commission, the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) as well as partners at the federal level on the workability of the ACES programme and the role of State

governments to maximize its opportunities.

5. The Forum's COVID-19 Technical Advisory Group (CTAG) led by Professor Oyewale Tomori briefed members on the status of the COVID-19 vaccine roll out across the States including the increasing concerns of the public on the safety of AstraZeneca vaccines. CTAG recommended that Nigeria should continue to vaccinate all eligible persons with the AstraZeneca vaccine in line with the latest WHO recommendations as available evidence, including findings from research in which some CTAG members are involved showing that the

AstraZeneca vaccine is safe.

6. Governors reiterated their belief in the safety of the AstraZeneca vaccines and commit to continuously encourage uptake of the vaccines by all eligible persons in their States. Governors also encourage the public to report any adverse events noticed following COVID-19 vaccination.

7. Following a briefing from the Chairman/Chief Executive Officer of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), Rtd. Gen. Muhammad Buba Marwa on Managing the Drug Crisis in the country, State governments committed to supporting the logistics and operational activities of NDLEA officials in their States, as well as programmes that will promote drug use prevention in the country. Given the high correlation between drug use and insecurity in the country, the Forum will push for a greater role for NDLEA in Nigeria's security fight especially as it relates to combating drug abuse and the illicit trafficking of drugs.

8. H.E Emmanuel A. Akabe Deputy Governor of Nasarawa State briefed the Forum on the inception activities of the Presidential Economic Advisory Council (PEAC) which was set up to accelerate economic growth and lift at least 100 million people out of poverty by 2030. The PEAC has recommended the development of a poverty and growth strategy for the country focusing among others, on macroeconomic stabilization, redistribution, structural transformation, and industrialization. The strategy will be overseen by the National Economic Council (NEC) through a Steering Committee which should include at least one governor from the six (6) geopolitical zones in the country.

9. On the States' Fiscal Transparency, Accountability and Sustainability (SFTAS) PforR, the NGF HelpDesk and SFTAS Programme Manager, Mr Olanrewaju Ajogbasile reported that the Independent Verification Agency has begun preparatory activities for the validation of the 2020 SFTAS Annual Performance Assessment (APA). He also presented

highlights of upcoming technical assistance activities coordinated by the NGF Secretariat for States including support on preparing Budget Implementation Reports in line with the National Chart of Accounts (NCoA); preparing a State Audit Law for the Offices of the State and Local Government Auditor Generals; preparing State and Local Governments' Audited Financial Statements for FY 2020; developing a Domestic Arrears Clearance Framework and Guide on the Online Publicly-Accessible Domestic Expenditure Arrears Database and the reconciliation of State Governments' Outstanding Debt Obligations (Foreign and Domestic Debt) in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Budget and National Planning, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), the Debt Management Office (DMO) and State

Ministries of Finance.

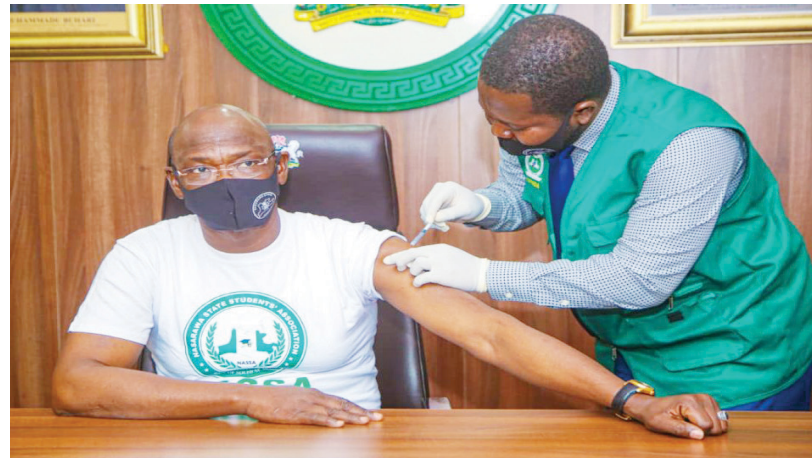
10. The latest SFTAS results show that 28 States – (Abia, Adamawa, Akwa Ibom, Anambra, Bauchi, Benue, Borno, Cross River, Delta, Ebonyi, Edo, Ekiti, Gombe, Imo, Jigawa, Kebbi, Kogi, Kwara, Niger, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Oyo, Plateau, Sokoto, Taraba, Yobe and Zamfara State) achieved the disbursement linked indicator (DLI 12.1) to strengthen their procurement function for COVID-19 or emergency situations and facilitate the participation of SMEs in public procurement in the resilient recovery phase. These States will be eligible for SFTAS disbursements under the DLI.

11. Lastly, the Forum received a presentation on the 2018 audited accounts of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) from the Facility for Oil Sector Transparency and Reform (FOSTER) led by its team lead, Mr Henry Adigun. The Forum welcomed the fiduciary risk assessment of the corporation. The additional information will support the work of State governments in engaging with the federal government to improve the governance arrangement of the oil industry.

*Governor Kayode Fayemi
Chairman, Nigeria Governors' Forum 17th March 2021



LEADING BY EXAMPLE, GOVERNORS FLAGGED OFF THE COVID-19 ASTRAZENECA JABS ACROSS THE COUNTRY



Gov Abdullahi Sule of Nassarawa State



Gov Dapo Abiodun of Ogun State



Gov Nasir El-Rufai of Kaduna State



NGF Chairman and Ekiti State Governor, John Kayode Fayemi



Gov Mohammed Badaru of Jigawa State



Gov Akeredolu of Ondo State



Gov Umaru Fintiri of Adamawa State



Gov Umar Ganduje of Kano State



Gov Bala Mohammed of Bauchi State



Gov Douye Diri of Bayelsa State



Gov Godwin Obaseki of Edo State



Gov Patrick Okowa of Delta State

LEADING BY EXAMPLE, GOVERNORS FLAGGED OFF THE COVID-19 ASTRAZENECA JABS ACROSS THE COUNTRY



Gov Darius Ishaku of Taraba State



Gov Solomon Lalong of Plateau State



Gov Aminu Tambuwal of Sokoto State



Gov Sani Bello of Niger State



Gov Seyi Makinde of Oyo State



Gov Bello Masari of Katsina State



Gov AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq of Kwara State



Gov Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi of Enugu State



Gov Bello Matawalle of Zamfara State



Gov Babajide Sanwo-Olu of Lagos State



Gov David Nweze Umahi of Ebonyi State



Gov Abubakar Akitu Bagudu of Kebbi State



...GOVERNORS FLAGGED OFF COVID-19 ASTRAZENECA JABS ACROSS THE COUNTRY



Gov Obiaano's Wife, Veronica took her jab abroad



Gov Okezie Ikpeazu of Abia State



Gov Gboyega Oyetola of Osun State



Gov Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya of Gombe State



Gov Hope Uzodinma of Imo State



Gov Fayemi's Wife, Bisi taking her first jab



NEWS FROM THE STATES

Collaboration, panacea to Niger Delta development, says Emmanuel

The Governor of Akwa Ibom State, Mr. Udom Emmanuel has advocated collaboration between Niger Delta States to forge a common front towards addressing challenges in the region.

He said this in a goodwill message at a 3-day retreat for Cabinet members of the Bayelsa State Government, at Ibom Icon Hotels and Golf Resort, Uyo.

Governor Emmanuel, who identified underdevelopment, unemployment, insecurity among others as a common challenge be-

devilling development in the Niger Delta region, stated that if leaders play their roles effectively, the challenges in the region could be surmounted regardless of support from government in the center.

"Leadership is not easy, when we talk about leadership, unfortunately in Nigeria everybody is looking at the governor, everybody inside this room is a leader and if we all play our roles as leaders we will be better off.

"We in the Niger Delta region are not fortunate in

so many ways, I have almost finished 6 years, not even one kilometre of road constructed by the federal government in my state, I don't know if you have there.

"With all the crude oil exploration in my state, I don't have a depot so what does that mean, it means we must struggle, we must find a way for our people and we must work for our indigene.

"The time for us to sit back and wait for others to do something for us is gone, we must see what we can do for the entire region, if

we can collaborate as a state, then the countries collaborate as Africa, then we have a whole lot to offer each other".

The governor charged Bayelsa State cabinet members to make the retreat count, urging them to apply the lessons in their assigned duties and responsibility.

He stressed on creativity, loyalty, commitment and love for their state as a yardstick that will further drive their passions towards effective service.

Emmanuel launches COVID-19 vaccination in Akwa Ibom

The Governor of Akwa Ibom State, Udom Emmanuel recently launched the COVID-19 vaccination in the state, urging residents, especially those in the critical sectors, to embrace the exercise.

Mr Emmanuel, represented by the Secretary to State Government, Emmanuel Ekwem, assured the people that the AstraZeneca vaccine was safe and had no life-threatening side effects.

He reminded the people that vaccines had, over the years, provided protection against non-treatable diseases.

The Akwa Ibom State Government on March 10 took delivery of 69,030 doses of AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine from the federal government.

Mr Emmanuel said the vaccine had been subjected to conventional safety and quality assurance processes as well as gotten the approval of the World Health Organization (WHO) and other relevant bodies.

"I want to assure the people of Akwa Ibom State that the vaccines have been put through conventional safety and quality assurance processes and were largely approved by WHO and other relevant bodies.

"We started administration of the vaccine on health workers and I want to assure you that we have not gotten any report of life-threatening side effects," he said.

He applauded efforts of scientists and researchers towards the discovery and production of the vaccines.

The state Commissioner for Health, Augustine Umoh, said, vaccination was the last hope against non-treatable diseases and viruses.



Akwa Ibom Governor Udom Emmanuel in a chat with Governor Douye Diri of Bayelsa State

Emmanuel declares Dakkada Towers ready for lease

The twenty-one storey smart building in Uyo, the Dakkada Towers, a flagship project of the Governor Udom Emmanuel-led government of Akwa Ibom State, has been declared completed and up for lease to high-earned clients.

Contractors handling var-

ious projects in the state have been charged to ensure strict adherence to deadlines set for completion and delivery of projects in their purview, in line with the Completion Agenda of the administration.

These were parts of resolutions at the State Ex-

ecutive Council meeting presided over by Governor Udom Emmanuel, on Tuesday, at the Exco Chambers, Government House, Uyo.

Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Mr Ini Ememobong, who briefed Government House Correspondents, said the

Council was pleased with the report of completion of work on the Dakkada Towers and has further directed relevant government agencies to commence the process of leasing out the state-owned twenty-one storey smart building to interested tenants.



Inuwa reiterates commitment to transparency, accountability

Gombe State Governor, Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya has expressed optimism that the State2State project of the United States Agency for International Development, USAID through the Development Alternative Initiative (DAI) will support the reforms being carried out by his administration to ensure that citizens of the State benefit from the lofty ideals of the partnership.

He stated this at the national virtual launch of USAID Nigeria, State Accountability, Transparency and Effectiveness (State2State) activity in Gombe, Bauchi, Sokoto, Akwa Ibom, Ebonyi and Adamawa States.

The governor said since coming into office in 2019, his administration has embarked on significant governance reforms having realized that there will be no meaningful development without it.

This, he said, is in line with the promise he made to the people to deliver on good governance which guarantees democratic dividends to the citizens of the State.

"I am delighted that the State2State project has started in Gombe since October 2020 and is a testimony to the commitment made by USAID

Participates in National Virtual Launch of USAID Nigeria State2State Project

when the Country Director visited us in December, 2019".

Governor Yahaya said since the commencement of USAID activities in the state, he had hosted the Chief of Party of the project, Mr. Tressan Sullivan and his team in his office late last year where an insightful discussions were held on the new project and the vision of his administration for the state.

"I'm pleased to note the aim of State2State project; which is strengthening governance systems with a focus on public financial management [PFM] and procurement, as well as monitoring and evaluation related to the delivery of services in key sectors such as basic education, primary health care, and water, sani-

tation and hygiene [WASH]) as well as increasing government responsiveness to citizen needs, priorities and improving government and civil society capacity to manage conflict, which he emphasized sits firmly with this administration's focus on human capital development as the pathway to sustainable prosperity for the people.

"Some of the Governance reforms that we embarked upon since coming into office include; establishment of the Budget planning and Development partner's coordination office, headed by a development practitioner. This office coordinates all donor related activities in the state".

The Governor added that his administration has equal-

ly established the Bureau for Public Service Reforms, trimmed down the number of Ministries from 29 – 21, re-examination of the fiscal laws in the state that were passed into law some years ago but were not being fully implemented.

Other reforms, Governor Inuwa Yahaya explained, include the re-organization of the State Internal Revenue Generation outfit which is already yielding positive results, noting that brought about the highest IGR collected in 2020 ever since the state was created in 1996.

"We introduced the Treasury Single Account in order to block leakages. We have embarked on biometric data capture of Civil Servants.

We developed a Ten-year

development plan tagged Development Agenda for Gombe State DEVAGOM 2021 – 2030, Establish the Hospitals Management Board as well as the Health Insurance Scheme (Go-Health) to ensure an efficient delivery of health care to our people across the state".

While acknowledging the efforts of other USAID funded projects in Gombe state such as USAID Strengthening Education in the North East, SENSE, Mercy Corps and host of others, the Governor expressed the hope that the State2State project will support the reform efforts being carried out in Gombe State to ensure that our citizens benefit from the lofty ideals of the partnership, expressing the hope that the State2State project will look at the road map in DEVAGOM, hoping that the project will provide support where necessary.

In their separate remarks, the Governors of Sokoto, Akwa Ibom, Ebonyi, Bauchi and Adamawa States agreed with their Gombe State counterpart on their readiness to support the successful implementation of the project in their respective states.

In a goodwill message, the chairman, Nigeria Governors' Forum and Ekiti State Governor, Dr. Kayode Fayemi called on the benefiting states to take advantage of the USAID's State2State project to improve their capacity on accountability and transparency in public service.

Earlier speaking, the United States Ambassador to Nigeria, Mary Beth Leonard said USAID will continue to provide technical support to Nigeria to strengthen accountability, transparency and effectiveness in public service.

The five-year, \$72 million State2State Activity will help improve how the participating states plan and budget, raise revenues, increase civil society participation, and oversee service delivery in the health; education; and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) sectors.





NGF condemns attempt on Ortom's life

The news of the broad daylight attempt to cut short the life of the Governor of Benue State, Dr Samuel Ortom, is shocking and a rude awakening.

The Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF) empathizes with the governor and the people of Benue State on this sad, cowardly, and wicked plan and vehemently condemns the act in its entirety.

All hands must be on deck to uncover the identities of those involved in this heinous crime.

The NGF wishes to state categorically that the attempt to make Benue State ungovernable is unacceptable and will fail woefully.

Only recently the brother of one of the former governors of the state was mowed down in cold blood. This dishonourable and shameful act of resorting to violence, for whatever reason, to eliminate citizens of Benue State by brutal means must not continue.

The NGF as a platform for all the 36 Governors will continue to encourage its members to stand firm in the service of their people regardless of the evil machinations of those who do not wish Nigeria well.

Evil will not be allowed to triumph over good, not in Benue and not anywhere in this country.

While all governors will continue to pray for Governor Ortom, the NGF wishes to draw the attention of all evil doers that not only will they continue to fail in their wicked acts, but they will also definitely be traced and punished for their crimes, no matter how long it takes.

Once again, the NGF prays for Governor Ortom and wishes him long life as his safety and that of all the people of Benue State continue to be paramount to the NGF.

Govs back financial autonomy for State legislature, judiciary

Governors of the 36 states of the country have given backing



Samuel Ortom

for a financial autonomy for states legislators and judiciary.

The Governor of Sokoto state, Aminu Waziri Tambuwal spoke to newsmen after he led the chairman of States Legislators Conference, Abubakar Suleiman, to meet with the Chief of Staff to the President, Professor Ibrahim Gambari at the Presidential Villa, Abuja.

He assured that modalities for the implementation of the financial autonomy would be concluded on Thursday next week. Tambuwal was accompanied by Governor Simon Lalong of Plateau State who was one time speaker of the state House of Assembly and his Zamfara State counterpart, Bello Matawalle. Speaking on why the delegation was at the State House, Tambuwal, who was former Speaker of

the House of Representatives said the meeting was at the instance of President Muhammadu Buhari.

"We are here to meet the Chief of Staff on the instruction of Mr. President and you can see that the leadership of the Speakers Conference of the States of the Federation is here, ably led by the Chairman. "It's all about Order 10 which has to do with the independence, financial autonomy of the legislature and the judiciary at the State level.

"So, it's a continuous meeting, and we are going to meet next week Thursday when we hope to finalize on the framework and modalities of implementing the autonomy of the state legislature and the judiciary." The governors had come under criticism for allegedly frustrating efforts to grant financial autonomy to state legislators and state judiciary. However, Tambuwal said that the governors were in support of financial autonomy for the state lawmakers, adding that there was no impediment towards the implementation of the President's Executive Order.

"By next week Thursday we will be meeting to finalize the framework. We are all in support of it by the grace of God," he said.

On the controversy trailing the N30,000 minimum wage as some states were the Governors were yet to implement, he said, "Well our Chairman (Chairman, Nigeria's Governors Forum) and the team of governors forum are meeting with the labour, I don't want to preempt that meeting please.

NGF decries 157,000 tuberculosis deaths annually

The Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF) has lamented that an estimated 157,000 Nigerians die yearly from tuberculosis related illnesses.

The Forum therefore called on the Federal Government to provide necessary support to the States so they can domesticate and achieve the targets and commitments made at the United Nations High-level Meeting on Tuberculosis held in 2018.

Dr John Kayode Fayemi, Governor of Ekiti State and Chairman, NGF, in a statement, said that the targets and commitments expect that by 2022, Nigeria will be back on track in her efforts to ensure the end of TB by 2030.

According to the NGF boss, the event also provides opportunity to renew commitment to accelerate efforts at the national, state, local government and community levels to eradicate TB in Nigeria.

"Tuberculosis is an airborne disease that affects millions of people regardless of socio-economic status.

"Though it is preventable and curable, it has remained the deadliest infectious disease globally.

"Currently, Nigeria is one of the countries with the highest burden of TB, ranking first in Africa and sixth globally.

"It is estimated that about 18 Nigerians die of TB everyday which translates to 432 people monthly and 157,000 yearly.

"Over the last decade, government and partners have implemented various interventions to ensure that people with TB are found and treated.

"However, the advent of Covid-19 pandemic and its control measures in 2020 further impacted on the health system including TB services, setting back progress made.

"Despite this setback, the government in partnership with other stakeholders are working to address these challenges by strengthening the capacity of State TB Program to be more effective in its role; support revitalization and upgrading of health facilities to provide appropriate TB services especially diagnosis; mobilize more domestic resources for TB program and activities in the State and to establish a multi-stakeholder State Stop TB Partnerships.

"Therefore, in accordance with the theme of this year's World TB Day – "The Clock is Ticking", we reaffirm our commitment to work with other stakeholders to end TB in our respective States," Fayemi said.

"We also call on the Federal Government to provide necessary support to the States to be able to domesticate and achieve the targets and commitments made at the United Nations High-level Meeting on Tuberculosis held in 2018.

"These targets and commitments expect that by 2022, we will be back on track in our efforts to ensure we are able to end TB by 2030," Fayemi concluded.



Youths need to be more involved in governance, says Obaseki

In Governors Connect with the Youth Population and Road to a Violence-Free Nigeria, Edo State Governor, Godwin Obaseki, tasks youths on making their numbers count in electoral decisions, and other sundry national issues. Excerpts:

Let's talk about the ENDSARS movement. Soon after the protests, Edo State had a youth summit. It happened seamlessly like you had been pre-planned. Did you anticipate this and what played out in your mind as the protests unfolded?

For us in Edo State, EndSARS was not a surprise because the issues that we dealt with during my elections were very fundamental and germane to any nation, which is that the patrimony of a country should not be exclusively decided by a very few. For us in Edo, we knew that if we did not challenge the political status-quo and get more participation and more involvement, particularly by young people, it would just be like a timebomb waiting to explode. We have run a country where for reasons that cannot be totally explained or blamed on any particular group or groups, we have found ourselves excluding quite a substantial number of segments of our society. I think the starting point is to address the structural deficiency which as a democracy, the system should guarantee that the majority is heard always.

Most young people in this country don't feel they are participating in the political process or governance system at all.

So, you hear them talk about "they will not allow us". And you ask, who are 'they'? It should be about us. And so, the issues that culminated in the EndSARS crises, for us, was one of participation and involvement by a large segment of the society because of the way the country is being governed.

Do you believe the protests were justified?

It is not a question of being justified but more like a combination of a process of people feeling that they needed to be heard and they thought they had run out of options.

Even though a 5-point demand was made on the government by the protesters, it became obvious the issues are many. Was this a vote of no confidence in the present leadership of the country?

I think we are all culpable; I mean the governed and those who govern. It has to be a shared responsibility. You cannot heap the blame totally on any segment, because the problems we are dealing with have been a long time coming. They didn't just start today. For me fundamentally, it's about a weakening state structure, where so much has been central-like economy, opportunities, securities, you know?

Things that affect your everyday life seem to be centralized for a longtime, over generations. People have now grown to expect substance from one centre and unfortunately, the centre has not been appropriately governed as it should have been and with the coming of COVID-19, they realized that they don't have the resources to carry on the responsibilities. It was a reality check.

For the young people whom I believe have been shortchanged, they didn't receive the quality of education that we got and therefore do not have the spread of opportunities that we had. In Edo state, we are working hard and doing two things.

First, to go back to the foundation of our educational system and begin to retrain children at an early age to live in a much more competitive and digital world.

For those who have fallen to the cracked walls; those who have gone through school, we now try to inculcate work vocations in them; get them into vocational schools, get them into technical centres to learn skills but we need policies at the center too that will help regenerate the economy; that will help create opportunities for these young people to find work.

If we continue to rely on an economic system that encourages import, then it will impact negatively on our capacity to manufacture, to grow food, and to provide quality service locally.



Governor Obaseki

People will always lookout and feel that what is coming from outside is better than what is produced locally and they will not patronize our local products but if we have a rethink about our economic strategy and a whole economic outlook to now focus in doing more for ourselves and depending less on imports then we have no reason not to grow all the food we eat in this country.

How involved are the youth of Edo state with these various programs you been embarking on?

Like I said, in Edo this second term, my cabinet has to be dominated by youth and young people so that, they also have insights into governance and begin to see things themselves and also have hands-on experiences on what the reality of governance is. They must know. We need to reengineer different mindsets on how things should be done. It's their world so we need to get them more involved. We need to encourage the use tools like technology which they are a lot more comfortable with to organize society; that's what we are doing in Edo State. That is why we are continually engaging with youth. It was quite easy to get the youth together; call all of them together be-

cause they played a very active role in voting me back into power. I understand them and feel their pulse. This is why it was easy to summon them and say guys, what do we do? We are at a crossroads; this is what is happening and we cannot continue the blame game; how do we now begin to set a new agenda?

The protests revealed the structural deficiencies in our national lives. Shouldn't this spur us into correcting the flaws?

There is usually no perfect system; most systems evolve and clearly, Nigeria has become too large and sophisticated to have one central policing system. I believe the authorities also have realized that we are a federation and we have several federating units; we have local governments, states and the federal government. I believe that security, as important as it is, should also be subjected to the people who are in-charge at the local level, state level and people who are in charge at the federal level. It should be the same institutions; it might not be that efficient but they must be related and there must be checks and balances on each of them.

Yes, the EndSARS protests brought that to light- that one central policing system is not that efficient. People



must feel that they are involved in their security. Security is local, nobody can secure you from outside; you can only be secured by your own people and community. So that is beginning to happen and I think we should just encourage it. We in Edo State have worked with the federal government on community policing we have recruited about two thousand who have undergone training and we are deploying them to their communities.

They are supposed to pick intelligence. They are supposed to be responsible for law and order, so here we are making progress, it could be accelerated. One of the outcomes from the End SARS protest is that we should move on a faster pace.

Is self-protection via private licencing of arms the way to go?

Well, I don't agree to that. I don't believe that you should deploy violence to deal with violence because it will just result to anarchy. The challenge with security today is the proliferation of arms across the country and also across the sub-regions. So, if you now say we should bring in more arms to deal with this challenge, it doesn't sound logical to me at all. What we should really be thinking of is how to disarm people who shouldn't be in possession of guns and try to have stronger security institutions to make people feel safe. People are only trying to be their own government. So, you have your borehole because you don't have public water supply, you want to have your generator because the state can't provide power. You want to have your own arms because the state can't provide security for you. It suggests that the state has failed but I don't think we are there yet.

Ethnic profiling rings loud as Nigerians crave an end to the spate of violence. How can we change this attitude?

I think it's clearly wrong for people to profile crime. Prevalent in Nigeria today it's sheer criminality; and crime is crime; it should not be politicized or ethnified. The people you are trying to categorize as criminals, have always lived in peace with the communities they found themselves. There is really no community in this country that you don't have herdsmen doing their business of rearing cattle. So, rather than trying to generalize, we should step back and ask ourselves what has gone wrong? In Edo we have two to three generations of Hausa-Fulani that have lived here, and they are not criminals. They go about doing their legitimate businesses, bringing in lots of tomatoes, onions, foodstuff and cattle. So, they are not the ones committing the crimes. They are as much victims just like the rest of us. When I spoke to the Sarkin Fulani and the leadership, we had to clear the room and he told me "we are much victims like you guys have because these bandits attack us and they threaten us because we speak the same language. We don't speak in cases where we have reported, we have not been given enough protection.

A certain case in point is that of the Sarkin Fulani in Okene who was slaughtered with his two wives because he gave information relating to some of these bandits. So, we should not ethnicise the crime that we are dealing with in Nigeria.

Do you subscribe to the idea of giving amnesty to bandits and other criminal elements in the North?

I think the amnesty was based on disarmament, and



I THINK WE ARE ALL CULPABLE; I MEAN THE GOVERNED AND THOSE WHO GOVERN. IT HAS TO BE A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY. YOU CANNOT HEAP THE BLAME TOTALLY ON ANY SEGMENT, BECAUSE THE PROBLEMS WE ARE DEALING WITH HAVE BEEN A LONG TIME COMING. THEY DIDN'T JUST START TODAY. FOR ME FUNDAMENTALLY, IT'S ABOUT A WEAKENING STATE STRUCTURE, WHERE SO MUCH HAS BEEN CENTRAL-LIKE ECONOMY, OPPORTUNITIES, SECURITIES, YOU KNOW?

a lot of armed militants were encouraged to surrender their weapons. In any peace treaty or program to keep peace, that is the first thing to do. So, yes if it is possible to appeal to a lot of arms bearing bandits, we should do so. Please, note too that the Niger Delta militants were not criminals but rather aggrieved youths fighting for fairness and equity in their region.

What we have today is very deferent. This part of the country that has been destabilized for the better part

of the past two decades and there has been a lot of influx from outside the country into Nigeria, so quite a lot of the bandits may not be Nigerians. It will be tall order to ask them to come and disarm, and when you disarm, what next? It is possible to disarm some of the cattle rearers who are holding arms for their individual protection, if you promise to take them into proper ranches and settle them to continue sustaining their economic livelihoods.

Some Nigerians believe insecurity in the country is thriving because some political elites are benefiting from it. A case in point is a few traditional rulers who have been found to be conspirators with these criminal elements. Even the military is not spared in this conspiracy theory. How do you react to this reality?

I think we should be careful with the kind of information we put out like this about people in leadership positions being portrayed as instigators of the crises because it doesn't help. Even if there are a few unscrupulous ones, it should not be generalized broadly.

This is certainly not the norm; this does not happen on a daily basis. Like I said, we should not take our eyes off what is happening. The situation in Nigeria today is one in which the structure we have operated for the last four decades have expired. The government at the centre produces crude petroleum, then the states and the local governments at the end of the month file out to collect a share of it and as a result of this dependency, the economy is not being expanded leading to dwindling opportunities for a heightening population. That is the bottom of the crises we are having so as leaders and we all must now understand there is going to be a bit of pain but this is the time to open up; we have no business with importing at the level we are doing. We have no business not providing the quality of training and education to the young people so that they can be self-confident and self-reliant.

In Edo state, before I came in, it was the vogue to travel out of the country because that destination was considered to be better than home. It is the responsibility of leaders to make home feel like home; they need to provide for the people. Ironically, there is nothing we can't find here, going by the abundant natural resources we have. If one man with loads of money is able to build a refinery bigger than what we have as a country, then really, we do not have any excuse.

What are your thoughts on the COVID-19 pandemic and what is your advice to the youths of Nigeria?

We are here, this is where we are; post Covid-19 is our reality, so, let's just understand that is not going to be easy. The problems are not going to disappear; there is no magic and our leaders must not relent; we have to make difficult decisions by letting go of a lot of our luxury and identify with our people and together we can pull ourselves out of the situation.

My advice to young people is that they can't bring down the society to seek redress over any injustice done to them. This will not help us. We are going to be worse off so we need to get more involved and insist just like we are doing in Edo state. Let's go out there and organize ourselves and ensure that at the local government and at the state level, our voices must be heard. You have got the numbers, so anyone who ignores you cannot come back to power; just as we have done in Edo State.



NEWS FROM THE STATES

Tambuwal takes COVID-19 jab, calls for mass participation

Sokoto State Governor, Alhaji Aminu Tambuwal is one of the governors who recently received the Oxford-AstraZeneca COVID19 vaccine.

In Sokoto, the Commissioner of Health, Dr. Ali Iname led a team of medical personnel to administer the vaccine on the governor at the Government House, Sokoto.

Tambuwal took the jab alongside the Deputy Governor, Alhaji Muhammad Dan'iya and other top government officials in the state.

Speaking after taking the vaccine, Tambuwal implored the people of the state to make themselves available for the vaccination.

He, therefore, enjoined the people of the state especially the vulnerable to come



Gov Tambuwal taking the COVID-19 vaccine

forward and be vaccinated against the deadly disease.

He further explained that prevention "is better than cure. Instead of running here and there in need of support, it is better to take preven-

tive measures to ensure that everyone is vaccinated."

When asked about the side effects of the vaccine, the governor said globally the success recorded so far is more than the side effects.

Arewa youths laud Ugwuanyi's peace, economic prosperity initiatives

Governor Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi of Enugu State has been hailed by the National Executive Council and members of Arewa Youth Forum (AYF), both in the country and the Diaspora, for his untiring efforts in ensuring peace, economic prosperity and a unified Nigeria.

In a congratulatory message to the governor on his 57th birthday, the National President of Arewa Youth Forum, Gambo Ibrahim Gungu, on behalf of the forum, described the governor as "a worthy son of Nigeria, a humane, simple, humble, fo-

cused and accessible leader".

The Northern forum told Gov. Ugwuanyi that "your untiring efforts aimed at ensuring a unified Nigeria is established, well appreciated and documented, given by your good virtues and all-inclusive leadership style".

According to them, "you (Ugwuanyi) have within the shortest period of your political career made yourself to be an astute and exemplary leader who has committed the greatest part of his cherished days on earth to Nigeria's quest for economic prosperity, peace and national unity.

"We at Arewa Youth Forum are happy to be associated with you in upholding this spirit of nationhood.

"However, on this occasion of your 57th birthday, it is our prayer that God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob and the awesome God of David continues to strengthen and uphold your patriotic zeal to contribute more to serving the good Ndi Enugu and building of Enugu State.

"Once again, congratulations to our 'Gburugburu' and many more fruitful years ahead in prosperity and good health".

Nigeria drifting, requires better leaders, says Tambuwal

Nigeria is heading for the rocks except leaders rally round to save it from the impending doom and also get the leadership selection process right, Governor Aminu Waziri Tambuwal has said.

The Governor said this at the Sultan of Sokoto's palace where a reception and public lecture was held in honour of the members of the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS), Kuru, Jos, who were appointed into his administration.

Responding to a paper titled: "The Responsibility of a State and Stable Democracy in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects," delivered at the event by the former Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Prof. Attahiru Jega, Gov. Tambuwal said: "it is a collective responsibility to reconstruct the processes and bring better people on board."

Agreeing with the recommendations of the paper, the governor however lamented that Prof. Jega did not mention the recent SARS experience of END SARS protests that nearly shut down the country, asking: "What can we do if these young men and women who protested possibly aspire to fill certain positions?"

He, therefore, ad-

monished leaders in the country on the selection of their successors. "In all they are going to do, they must factor them in and see how best they can bring them on board and work with them and find accommodation for them."

"In Nigeria, we must build institutions. As it were, we have seen what happened to the electoral process, judiciary and what is still happening even at the National Assembly," he lamented.

"If you have strong leadership and there are no institutions, the moment that strong leadership gets weak, everything in the centre can no longer hold, so it is important to pay attention to building more institutions in Nigeria, he suggested."

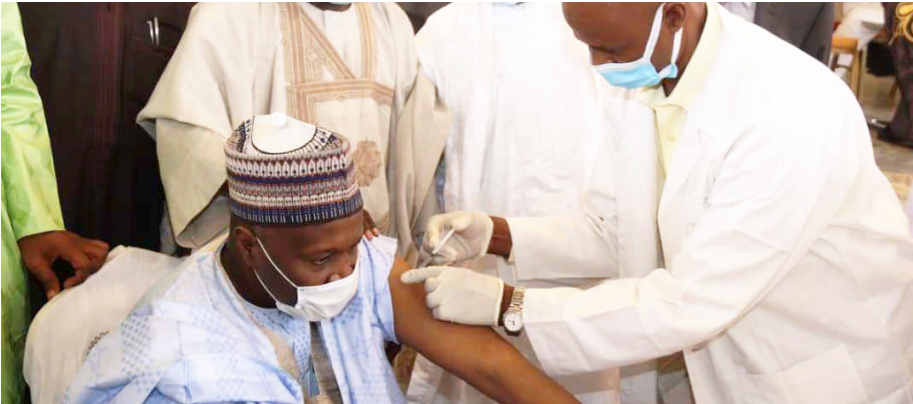
The governor further suggested that ways must be devised to see how best to bring about enabling environment for a common ground to be established where contending tendencies can be brought together.



Gov Tambuwal



NEWS FROM THE STATES



Gov Inuwa taking the COVID-19 vaccine

Inuwa, Deputy, receive first jab of AstraZeneca Vaccine

Gombe State Governor, Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya recently flagged-off Covid-19 vaccination in the State.

The Governor, was administered the first dose of the AstraZeneca by his personal physician, Dr. Bello Abdulkadir at the banquet hall of the Government House.

Speaking shortly after being inoculated, the Governor said the coming of the Covid-19 vaccine signals a return to normalcy through the gradual lifting of travel and

work restrictions.

“We are grateful to the Federal Government for its role in ensuring Nigeria is not left out of the global vaccine programme. On our part, Government is making necessary plans to ensure the success of the Covid-19 vaccination campaign through careful mapping and targeting of eligible persons during this first phase of the campaign”.

He said the first phase of the vaccination programme will prioritize healthcare

workers in both public and private health facilities, this he added, is in line with global best practices where front-line health workers and other associated health personnel are given priority.

The Governor said, “subsequent phases of the vaccination campaign will target persons above 50 years of age, those with underlying medical conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, heart disease and asthma”.

Inuwa releases N775m for retirees' outstanding gratuity

Gombe state Government has commenced the payment of another tranche of outstanding gratuity to retired civil servants in the state.

This follows the release of 775 million Naira by Governor Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya for the payment of the retirees' benefits.

Sequel to the Governor's directives, the committee set up by His Excellency to verify and ascertain the correctness of outstanding gratuity owed state retirees has concluded arrangements to commence the payment and therefore requests retired state civil servants

from January to December 2015, to come forward for verification and collection of their entitlements.

The exercise, according to the Chairman of the committee and State Auditor-General, Muhammad Buba Gombe will hold tomorrow, Monday, 15th March, 2021 at the Treasury Headquarters, Gombe by 9:00 O'clock in the morning.

According to the committee, LIFE RETIREES are to come along with Audited Computation sheet, Bank Verification Number (BVN),

Civil Service Commission (CSC) approval for retirement and Identification Card (I.D Card) while dependants of LATE RETIREES are to present Letter of Administration (from the probate Registry High Court of Justice, Gombe State), Death Certificate and Original Computation sheet.

Recall that the administration of Governor Inuwa Yahaya had inherited liabilities of gratuity arrears of over N14 billion from the past administration which had abandoned the payment of the retirees' entitlement since 2014.

Gombe Government to Build 110 Standard Libraries in Schools Across the State

Gombe State Government is to spend the sum of Three Hundred and thirty three million naira (N333, 000, 000) in the construction of 110 standard libraries in schools across the State.

Governor Inuwa Yahaya disclosed this at the commissioning of a newly built library at the Jekadafari Primary school, Gombe and the distribution of motorcycles, instructional materials and sports facilities to schools across the State.

Represented by the Secretary to the State Government, Professor Ibrahim Abubakar Njodi, the Governor told guests at the event that his administration inherited huge challenges in the education sector with Gombe ranked 34th out of 36 states in the federation in external examinations. This, the Governor explained, prompted his administration to immediately declare a State of emergency in the sector, particularly at the basic level in order to salvage it from total collapse.

“The establishment of Primary school library is yet another bold step in the right direction towards addressing the challenges inherent in basic education, the importance of a library as a foundation for pupils/ students' self motivation cannot be over-emphasized as it will greatly enhance learning in schools across the State”.

“To this end and considering the importance of a library as the fastest growing means for inducing self motivation in learning, the State Ministry of Education, through the State

Universal Basic Education Board, SUBEB, will undertake the construction of 110 standard libraries across the State at the total cost of three hundred and thirty-three million 333,000,000 in the first phase”.

The Governor directed Education Secretaries and head teachers in the State to include library period of at least 80 minutes per week on their school time table to enable students and pupils read on their own under the guidance of a trained librarian.

“Government has also noted with delight the prompt procurement of 31 additional motorcycles in order to enhance monitoring of Schools by quality Assurance Officers in all the eleven local government areas. Similarly, the provision of instructional materials and sports equipment worth over 85 million naira to schools is highly commendable”.

Earlier speaking, the Commissioner of Education, Dauda Batari Zambuk said Governor Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya's interventionist policy in education sector is beyond imagination, describing it as one that will yield positive fruits and be remembered for many years to come.

The Executive Chairman, State Universal Basic Education Board, SUBEB, Hon. Babaji Babadidi said as part of measures to improve the education sector in the State, the administration of Governor Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya has carried out sweeping reforms in the state especially at the basic level.



EBONYI: ADDRESS PRESENTED BY GOVERNOR DAVID NWEZE UMAHI ON THE OCCASION OF THE OPENING CEREMONY OF EBONYI #ENDSARS YOUTH SUMMIT ON 3RD MARCH, 2021

Welcome all of you to this all-important state youth summit convoked by our administration to address all the youth agitations, perceptions and other burning national issues that triggered the #ENDSARS protest that almost overwhelmed our nation in violence. It is this national imperative that informed our resolve to be among the first states to engage our youths through this 7-day Summit.

As an aftermath of the #ENDSARS protest, the Federal Government did set up a youth committee to address the issues behind the #ENDSARS protest that took place late last year 2020.

On the basis of the committee's recommendation, the Federal Government through the National Economic Council (NEC) resolved to among other things, engage the youth representatives of civil society organizations, religious and traditional leaders and to focus on issues like employment, social safety net programmes, wealth creation, digital economy, education, sport development, creative and hospitality industry, security, governance issues and National unity.

This youth dialogue is scheduled to hold in each of the states of the federation after which each state, shall send a delegation of selected youths to represent their states at the Geo-political zones. The representatives of each Geo-political zone shall proceed to the National level for National Youth Summit that will be convened by the Federal Government.

This Youth Summit in Ebonyi State named "Ebonyi #ENDSARS Youth Summit" is with a theme: "Youth Engagement in National Development" and it covers thematic areas of Wealth Creation, Social Safety Net, Employment Creation, Creative and Hospitality Industry, Education, Security, Good Governance and National Unity as have been mentioned.

It is hoped that this Youth Summit shall afford opportunities for the representatives of our young intellectuals, students of different institutions at home and in diaspora, youths leaders of different civil societies, political organizations and young people living with disabilities to brainstorm and make inputs on how best to move our state and nation forward.

The State Planning Committee has drawn topics from the thematic areas, thus we have the following topics:

a. Harnessing Youth Potentials in Governance by Rev. Dr. David Chuks Ogbueli

b. Economic Diversification, the Way Forward. (Wealth Creation and Job Creation) by Dr. Joe Abah

c. Role of Ebonyi Youths in Economic Sustainability & Stability of Ebonyi state by Dr. Mark Abani

d. Youth participation in governance at all levels by Prof Eugene Nweke

e. Statutory Framework/Legislative Amendments for Active Youth Inclusiveness in Governance Prof. Omaka SAN

f. Youth Education, Challenges and Solutions by Prof. Jessy Uneke

g. Repositioning Nigeria's Age Long Educational Curriculum and Self Employment by Prof. Afam Icha Ituma

h. Taking Advantage of the Untapped Potentials in the Entertainment Industry by Mr. Zack Orji.

i. Harnessing the Youth Potentials in the Creative & Hospitality Industry by Mr. Muhammed Abass.

j. Sports Development Among the Youth by Mr. Abdul Mumini Yusuf.

k. Security Challenges and Reforms- Prevalent Issues and Solutions by General Obi Umahi (Rtd).

l. The Role of Ebonyi Youth in Security Improvements in the State by General Obi Umahi (Rtd) and

m. Promotion of National Religious Cohesion by Archbishop Ede.

n. Two of Nigeria's football stars, Mr Kanu Nwankwo and Mr Peter Rufai will be on ground on the closing ceremony to engage our dear youths on practical experience on vistas of opportunities in entertainment industry.

The youths shall be engaged in the first three days by Resource Persons and Panel of Discussants with opportunities for questions and answers to make the event very participatory. The remaining days shall be exclusively for feedback from the youths which shall be harnessed through syndicate discussions by delegations from the 13 Local Government Areas and the state based non-governmental organ-



Governor Umahi

izations, and also paper presentation by group leaders. There will be a selection of the people that will represent Ebonyi Youths in the Zonal summit. Youths are expected to bare their minds on any issue of youth's interest especially matters that will engender youth mainstreaming in national governance.

All submissions, contributions and indeed the submit communicate shall be aggregated and presented during the closing ceremony which shall hold on Wednesday 10th, 2021 at this State Christian Ecumenical Centre. Presentation of those to be selected by the youths to represent them at the South East zonal summit shall also be done during the closing ceremony.

At this juncture, let me reiterate the determination of this administration towards the enhancement of the capacity of our youths, harvest of the talents of our gifted youths and their empowerment to ensure that they take their proper place as the young leaders with beautiful ideas to make a great difference in the socio-economic development of our dear state and Nigeria.

have made a modest effort in changing the narratives of our dear state through the provision of solid infrastructure, creation of beautiful environment and introduction of life changing empowerment programmes. We have opened up our

rural communities and established socio-economic facilities that will boost the economic base of the state, create jobs for our people and enhance self reliance and self sufficiency among our people. We have built institutions that will enhance the capacity of our youths, entrepreneurs, artisans, craftsmen and technicians. This we have done through the establishment of Vocational College and King David Gifted Academy and the revampment of our primary and secondary schools.

As part of our efforts to give meaning to the lives of all inhabitants of Ebonyi state:

a. We have introduced #ENDSARS Empowerment Programme and have approved the sum of Three Billion Naira (N3,000,000,000.00) to inject in the empowerment of not less than 3000 Ebonyians, including youths and women.

b. Federal Mortgage Bank Housing Scheme for Civil Servants has taken off in two locations in Ebonyi State.

c. Social Housing Scheme for the displaced people at the airport has been approved by Family Homes Fund under the office of the Vice President

a. We are opening three ICT Learning Centres for the youths, one in each of the three senatorial zones.

b. We have concluded arrangements for the take-off of School Inter House Sports in the State.

c. King David's Unity Cup shall

take-off before June, 2021. Screening of participants shall commence immediately.

d. Queen Rachel's Tournament for female athletes shall take-off simultaneously with king David's cup

e. King David's Quiz Competition in Mathematics, Science, English, Current Affairs and History shall take-off in the primary, secondary and university in our State

f. We have secured Federal Government's approval to set up a limestone granules plant and this will create jobs for our teaming youths.

g. Our Ring Road Project will soon commence and this will also create jobs for the youths.

We are strategic in our programme implementation and project execution such that we place premium on Infrastructure and Human Capital Development as an indispensable twin pillars of development that must be achieved for us to have a prosperous state.

This is why we have prioritized in our 2021 budget, education, health, human capital development, agriculture, among other critical sectors that will attract the primary attention of our administration. This youth engagement processes shall also be taken seriously by our administration and we are ready to project the course of the youth to ensure that their voice is heard.

I will at this moment thank all the Special Guests and Resource Persons that have honoured us with their esteemed presence. I have no doubt that with your experience and track-records in your fields of life, our youths will make the best use of this summit to change the narratives of our country and add force to the quest for a united, indivisible and egalitarian nation where peace, love and justice shall reign supreme.

I congratulate our dear vibrant youths for making themselves available in this all important summit and hope that it will be fruitful and satisfy the dreams and aspirations of the for-bearers of this nation.

It is therefore my honour and pleasure to declare this ceremony open. Thank you and God bless you

*Engr. Chief David Nweze Umahi FNSE, FNATE, Governor of Ebonyi State



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UGWUANYI: ADVANCING PEACE, DEVELOPMENT @ 57

By Louis Aмоke

Seven key attributes define his life story: Faith in God, peacefulness, humility, compassion, discipline, vision and forbearance. Attaining 57 years of age on March 20, His Excellency, Governor Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi of Enugu State, has carved an enviable niche for himself as an outstanding leader with a unique governance philosophy.

Gov. Ugwuanyi, fondly known as Gburugburu, habitually appreciates and acknowledges his beloved "God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob and the awesome God of David," for the bold statement the Almighty has decreed in his life's odyssey. His peers readily acknowledge this strikingly humble trait.

A leader who stresses consensus, widely recognized by all for his commitment to peace, development and wellbeing of the people, especially the lowly and less privileged, Gov. Ugwuanyi has gone down in history as a phenomenon that stands tall among his contemporaries and tells the story that life is better enjoyed on the side of the above attributes.

Assuming office in 2015 at a time when the state's resources were growing leaner because of the nation's adverse economic realities, Gov. Ugwuanyi was undaunted and resolute to build Enugu State of the founding fathers' dreams, where peace, harmony, inclusive governance and rapid development hold sway.

The governor's sheer determination to alleviate the sufferings of the people and make life more meaningful for them, against all odds, gave birth to his administration's rural development policy aimed at taking democracy dividends to the doorsteps of rural dwellers.

His driving focus remains remembering the long-neglected, reconnecting rural dwellers with the realities of governance and addressing the hydra-headed imbalance between the urban and rural populace in terms of distribution of infrastructure and other basic amenities.

Besides the nation's economic meltdown, the governor, when he assumed office, also inherited a huge debt profile and other wage bills to be serviced. At that time, 27 states, excluding Enugu, could not pay workers' salaries, let alone embark on capital projects.

Governors resorted to bailout funds to meet the high demands of governance. What was more challenging was their inability to access the nation's excess crude oil funds, which enabled their predecessors to execute capital projects and address other sundry public needs.

In spite of all these, Gov. Ugwuanyi was able to lead Enugu State out of the woods and attain enviable heights as one of the most peaceful and safest states in Nigeria, being among the six economically viable states in the country that could survive without federal allocations.

Enugu State, with no oil, under Gov. Ugwuanyi's watch, was also rated as the second most advanced state in Nigeria, in the Ease of Doing Business by the World Bank Group, one of three states out of the 36 states of the federation that have fulfilled obligations to their workers (BudGIT), and among the seven states that are solvent with over 30 percent internally generated revenue (IGR) to fund additional economic activities (Economic Confidential magazine verdict).

It is on record that Enugu is in the list of the few states that commenced payment of the N30,000 new minimum wage to their workers without any form of rancour in January 2020. It is also on record that Gov. Ugwuanyi's administration has invested huge resources in road infrastructure, covering about 680km, largely concentrated in the rural areas.

Looking at history, Gov. Ugwuanyi is the only governor of Enugu State to witness two economic recessions in five years of his administration, the recent #EndSARS protests and a pandemic (COVID-19) that has brought a major setback to the entire world in terms of growth and development, coupled with other challenges.



The construction of the state's first flyover bridge, a landmark project, has commenced at the intractable Abakpa Nike/T-Junction road, to ease the traffic gridlock in the area. His administration has also made huge investments in other sectors of development such as health, education, security, investment promotion, agriculture, workers' welfare and empowerment.

For instance, Gov. Ugwuanyi's administration has constructed and renovated district hospitals and health centres in the state, especially in the rural areas, under the primary healthcare programme.

It has massively rehabilitated and transformed the former Colliery Hospital, Enugu, with the construction of new structures, which is now designated as the Enugu State Infectious Disease Hospital, for isolation and treatment of patients with infectious diseases.

Gov. Ugwuanyi's administration is presently constructing multi-billion-naira Specialist Hospital and College of Medicine blocks for the Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT) Teaching Hospital, Igbo-Eno, Enugu North Senatorial District.

In education, besides recruiting more than 5,000 primary and secondary school teachers, Gov. Ugwuanyi's administration has constructed, renovated and equipped 1,205 classroom blocks and other school projects, under ENSUBEB. It procured and distributed over 50,000 classroom furniture and other learning tools for primary school children and their teachers.

Under the PPSMB, the state government supplied and installed computers in 200 secondary schools and science equipment in 135 secondary schools; constructed and renovated classroom blocks, offices and hostels, among others. The story is the same in the state-owned tertiary institutions.

On workers' welfare, Gov. Ugwuanyi, who has been widely adjudged as one of the most labour-friendly governors in Nigeria, is known for his administration's prompt and regular payment of workers' salaries and retirees' pensions, among other incentives.

In his peacefulness, despite the nation's avalanche of challenges, Gov. Ugwuanyi has continued to spearhead and advance peace in Enugu State in a rare, dignified manner.

Today, Enugu State is not only enjoying a secure environment, businesses have continued to flourish as investors, tourists, families, relations and friends keep trooping to the state for various socio-economic engagements, with hotels fully booked most times.

The peace in Enugu State, which is largely responsible for the milestone achievements recorded by Gov. Ugwuanyi's administration, in spite of various challenges, has also engendered real estate development in the state and increased the state's IGR.

In actualising this peace, Gov. Ugwuanyi has invested and

sacrificed a lot. The governor has no enemy and has continued to pay the ultimate price for peace to reign in the state, and history will forever remember him for spearheading and institutionalising such a campaign that is extremely critical to the progress of the state.

His simplicity, goodwill, open-door policy, tolerance, compassion in lifting the downtrodden and direct contact with everyone, irrespective of class or status, are eloquent testimonies to his sophisticated background as a humble leader.

Gov. Ugwuanyi delights in the joy of his people and shares in their grief as well, keeping in touch at all times. Early this year, he was at the 82 Division of the Nigerian Army, Enugu, with cash gifts and food items, to solemnly identify with widows of fallen heroes, in commemoration of Armed Forces Remembrance Day.

This attribute was among the factors responsible for the governor's unprecedented victory, winning 95.54 per cent of the votes cast, during his re-election in 2019. This is actually the highest in the nation's electoral history.

As a man of conscience, Gov. Ugwuanyi, through his life's journey, experience and encounter with the people, has proved to be someone who does not forget the past or where he is coming from. He appreciates friendship, brotherhood and any deed of goodwill from people.

A case in mind is the governor's rare leadership role in reinventing the political expedition of the former Governor of Enugu State, Senator (Dr.) Chimaroke Nnamani. The senator, after he left office as governor, was confronted with stern challenges that almost retired him from active politics. But Gov. Ugwuanyi ensured that he returned to the Senate in 2019.

Nnamani as governor of Enugu State in 2003 and leader of Ebeano political family was instrumental to Gov. Ugwuanyi venturing into active politics as the member representing Igbo-Eze North/Udenu Federal Constituency in the National Assembly.

Speaking when he visited Gov. Ugwuanyi at Government House, Enugu, for the first time after 12 years since he left office, Nnamani thanked the governor for his benevolence, display of conscience, and for "giving me a second chance," saying: "Ugwuanyi has wiped my tears."

Sen. Ike Ekweremadu, who described Gov. Ugwuanyi as "a symbol of peace" and frowned at the handiwork of political jobbers when he led stakeholders of Enugu West Senatorial District to pay a solidarity visit to the governor, pronounced that they would continue to stand by Gov. Ugwuanyi to ensure that he advances and actualizes his peace and development initiatives for the state.

Besides, virtually all leaders of political, religious, traditional and socio-economic institutions in Enugu State and beyond are unanimous in their positive stance on Gov. Ugwuanyi's peace and good governance initiatives.

The spiritual director of the Adoration Ministry Enugu Nigeria (AMEN), Rev. Fr. Ejike Mbaka, has on several occasions, eulogized Gov. Ugwuanyi for entrenching peace and good governance in Enugu State, describing him as "a good man; a man of peace; a perfect genius; humble and ever-patient leader."

Recently, the national president of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), Bishop Wale Oke, at the 16th biennial conference in Enugu, where Gov. Ugwuanyi was conferred with the 'Defender of the Faith' award, alongside Vice-President Yemi Osinbajo, expressed delight at the governor's simplicity, his generosity to PFN and other churches in the state, as well as his disposition as a peaceful and God-fearing leader.

As Gov. Ugwuanyi clocks 57 years, it is worth noting that despite the avalanche of economic, security and public health challenges, he has kept faith with his core vision to "deploy government services to create fair and equal opportunity for every willing citizen to make a living and create wealth, educate our children, and enjoy life in a peaceful and secure environment". Happy birthday, Your Excellency!

•Louis Aмоke is SSA Media to Governor Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi



NEWS FROM THE STATES



Gov Matawalle taking the COVID-19 vaccine

Matawalle takes Astra Zeneca vaccination, says it's safe

Zamfara State Governor, Hon. Bello Mohammed Matawalle has received the Oxford-Astra Zeneca vaccine.

The state Commissioner of Health, Hon. Yahaya Mohammed Kanoma administered the injection on the Governor after which some other top government functionaries participated in the exercise.

According to the commissioner, the state received a total of 55,920 Astra Zeneca injections from the federal

government.

However, the Speaker, Zamfara State House of Assembly, Hon. Nasiru Magarya, the Deputy Chief of Staff to the Governor, Dr. Bashir Maru were the first to receive the vaccination at the Government House after the Governor.

While addressing the press after receiving the vaccine, the Governor said the federal government did not make the vaccination compulsory but appealed to the citizens

to participate in the exercise, assuring that his administration would give total support to ensure the success of the exercise in the state.

He explained that with the flagging off of the exercise, everyone who wishes to take the vaccination in the state is free to take the vaccination in the state.

The Governor urged the people of the state to always avoid anything that would bring public disturbances in the state.

...Commissions projects in Delta State; commends Okowa for uniting Nigerians

Zamfara State Governor, Hon. Bello Mohammed Matawalle has commissioned the newly constructed Igumbor-Otiku Secondary School, Boji-Boji, Agbor, Ika South Local Government Area, as well as a network of township roads in Delta state constructed by Governor Ifeanyi Okowa.

Matawalle was invited to Delta by his counterpart, Governor Okowa for the commissioning.

He commended the foresight of Governor Okowa for inviting him to carry out the exercise, noting that the move has demonstrated

love and the spirit of brotherliness by the good people of Delta and that Nigerians of all extractions are intrinsically good.

The Shattiman Sakkwato, who also said the invitation has demonstrated Governor Okowa's remarkable sense of patriotism and genuine love for a more united Nigeria, described his mission to Delta as that of strengthened bridge building that leaders need to appreciate in furtherance of the rich history, cultures and social environment of the disparate entities that formed the Nigerian federation and the fact

that our diverse history and culture is a source of our strength.

He congratulated Deltans for having a Governor whose sole focus is the advancement of the State through the provision of critical infrastructure considering the State's terrain, which comprises mangrove and freshwater swamps where road networks are vital in linking communities together and the deployment of social amenities to the people which according to him are a lifeline for Delta State and other communities with similar terrain in the whole of Niger Delta.

Matawalle gives bandits 2-months ultimatum to surrender

Bello Matawalle, Governor of Zamfara, recently gave bandits two months to surrender their weapons and embrace the state's peace initiative.

The governor, who gave the ultimatum in a broadcast on the security situation in the state, listed other steps his government is taking to tackle insecurity in Zamfara, adding that President Muhammadu Buhari has ordered the deployment of 6,000 additional troops to the state.

"As a fall out of my discussion with President Muhammadu Buhari and security high commands in Abuja, it was resolved that 6,000 additional troops are to be deployed to the state to complement the current efforts by the security forces. The troops will soon arrive in the state for their operations," he said.

"Again, the president has agreed to a timeframe within which the recalcitrant bandits should accept our peace truce and surrender their weapons to the government.

"Even though we are enjoying relative peace as a result of the dialogue and reconciliation programme, many bandits have refused to key into the programme and elected to sustain their attacks and other nefarious activities against our communities.

"Government has equally observed that there is sabotage by some unscrupulous elements, both within and outside the state. It is also observed that informants are becoming rampant and their callous activities undetected due to some of our people's attitude of indifference.

"As a further push to bring

to an end the activities of the recalcitrant bandits so as to bring lasting peace to the state, the recalcitrant bandits have been given two months from today within which to embrace the peace process and surrender their weapons to the government."

He warned "political actors" against compromising the security of the state, and directed traditional rulers and sole administrators of local government councils to "always remain in their respective domains to monitor the influx of any suspicious characters".

"Conveyance of more than two persons on a motorbike is hereby banned with immediate effect. Security agents are directed to arrest and arraign the violators of this order for prosecution," the governor added.

Movement of motorcycles in large numbers has also been banned in the Zamfara, just as social media handlers have been warned against spreading fake news, as the government "will no longer tolerate such unethical conduct and will deal decisively with anyone found in this act".

The two-month ultimatum for bandits comes two weeks after the abduction of more than 200 students from Government Girls Secondary School, Jangebe, on February 26.

The girls were later released after spending days in the custody of the bandits.

Meanwhile, the federal government has declared Zamfara a no-fly zone, and banned all mining activities in the state, as part of efforts to address insecurity.

Stop the Spread!



The Four COVID Personality Types *(spotted at the local grocery store)*

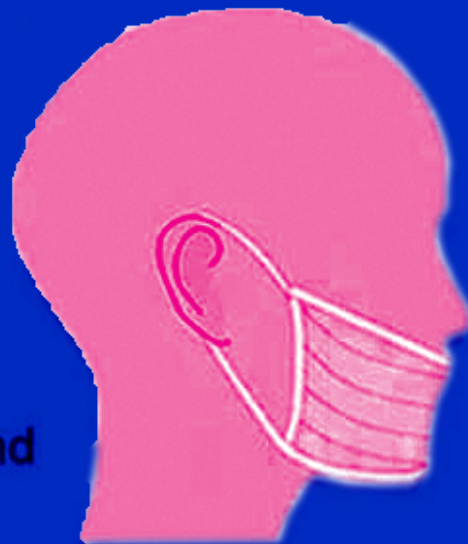
Believes
in science



Denies
science



Doesn't
understand
science



Believes in
magic



Let's not make it easy for the virus