

...AN NGF MONTHLY PUBLICATION

The Executive

Vol.3. No. 57 December 2023



SUMMARY

A close-up portrait of Governor Akeredolu, a man with a white beard and glasses, wearing a blue checkered suit jacket, a light blue shirt, and a purple tie. He is smiling and looking slightly to the right.

**THE
STATESMAN
WHO DARED**

Governor Akeredolu – 1956-2023



Commentary

Goodbye Aketi ...Plus Other Inspiring Stories

The year 2023 provided a tapestry of losses, challenges and triumphs. But more importantly, in terms of governance positives at the subnational level and at the centre, civilization remains a work in measurable progress.

The Nigeria Governors' Forum, NGF, lost one of its most outspoken members, H.E. Arakunrin Oluwarotimi Odunayo Akeredolu, CON, SAN, the governor of Ondo State who died at a hospital in Germany, on December 27, from prostate cancer complications.

The riveting tribute to the Arakunrin in: "The Statesman Who Dared," is our cover story.

A distraught H.E. President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, in a statement he personally signed, described Akeredolu as a confidant and political soulmate.

An equally smitten NGF Chairman, H.E. AbdulRahman AbdulRasaq, the Governor of Kwara State, expressed the Forum's grief at the demise of the notable legal luminary and conveyed NGF's commiserations to his grieving family and state.

In our special interview, "Nigeria Must Embrace Herbal Plants," Pioneer Director, Traditional Complementary and Alternative Medicine (TCAM) Department, Federal Ministry of Health, Pharm. Zainab Ujudud Shariff, clarifies the importance of integrative medicine. She also dissects the imperative of national rediscovery of herbal plants and looks at the role of the subnationals in domesticating integrative medicine and exploiting the huge herbal plants' potential.

Then brushing diplomacy aside, the Chairperson of Nigeria Governors Spouses' Forum, NGSF, Ambassador, Prof. Olufolake Abdulrazaq charges boys: "Don't Just

Man-Up, Speak Up," with regards to Sexual and Gender Based Violence, SGBV. She accurately notes that "a lot of the time, boys do not speak out because the society makes them believe that because they are boys, they shouldn't talk about such things. They are expected to man up."

Still on SGBV, the wife of Abia State Governor, Mrs. Priscilla Otti ups the ante and pledges to put up a workable action plan in collaboration with the State Ministry of Women Affairs to domesticate SGBV policy thrust of NGSF by ensuring that gender-based violence becomes a thing of the past. Our story, "Abia First Lady Pledges to Build SGVB Referral Centres," captures this bold footing.

Our story on "Plateau Attacks: Governor Mutfwang Vows to Foster Regional Harmony as Governors Show Solidarity," captures the response and commitment of the Plateau State governor with his fellow North Central governors to champion peace, unity, and substantial development across the region.

During a condolence visit led by the North Central Governors' Forum, Governor Mutfwang expressed profound gratitude for the Forum's unwavering support following the recent tragic attacks in Bokokos, Mangu, and Barkin-Ladi Local Government Areas and urged for unified efforts to combat the security challenges.

In a plus for governance, Ogun State came 6th out of 36 states in Nigeria and the FCT, according to Analysts Data Services and Resources' ranking.

In effect, the state under the leadership of Governor Dapo Abiodun, came tops in the financial sector; third in capital importation; third again in industrialisation and business competitiveness; fifth in citizens' livelihood and welfare; fourth in ICT infrastructure and fifth in education.

Ogun State came third in capital importation with 61.1 per cent. The state was only beaten by Lagos State, which came first with 68.7 per cent and FCT, 67.8 per cent, et cetera.

Our December edition also captures important multisectoral developments by the subnationals. Please, read on...

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TABLE OF CONTENTS



COVER STORY

4-8

THE STATESMAN WHO DARED
GOVERNOR AKEREDOLU – 1956-2023

02
COMMENTARY:
GOODBYE AKETI
...PLUS OTHER INSPIRING
STORIES



9
SOCIO-ECONOMIC
SCORECARD: OGUN
RANKS 6TH IN NIGERIA

10-12
JOURNALISTS CRUCIAL
IN CRAFTING, SHAPING
POLICIES OF GOVT – NGF DG



13
OBASEKI TAKES EDO ECONOMIC
SUMMIT TO CHINA, WOOS
INVESTORS WITH BUSINESS-
FRIENDLY REFORMS



14
URBAN FLOODING:
OYO GOVT DREDGES
8 FLOOD PRONE
RIVERS, STREAMS



15
GOV MAI MALA BUNI:
BUILDING A STRONGER POST-
INSURGENCY YOBE STATE



16
PLATEAU ATTACKS: GOVERNOR
MUTFWANG VOWS TO FOSTER
REGIONAL HARMONY AS
GOVERNORS SHOW SOLIDARITY

17-24
GENDER ISSUES



26-27
2023: THE FOOD
SECURITY CHALLENGES
IN NIGERIA

28-33
STRENGTHENING FISCAL TRANSPARENCY,
ACCOUNTABILITY, SUSTAINABILITY, AND THE EASE OF
DOING BUSINESS AT THE SUBNATIONAL LEVEL



34-35
HEALTH SECTOR
RENEWAL COMPACT



36
INAUGURATION OF
THE NUTRITION CORE
WORKING COMMITTEE
(NCWC) BY HIS
EXCELLENCY, THE VICE
PRESIDENT SENATOR
KASHIM SHETIMA

37-39
HEALTHCARE REVOLUTION:
NIGERIA MUST EMBRACE
HERBAL PLANTS – PHARM.
ZAINAB SHARIFF





THE STATESMAN WHO DARED

Governor Akeredolu – 1956-2023

By Louis Achi

Peering into the troubling future of humanity, the former French president, Giscard D'Estaing once counselled statesmen and world leaders that, "There can be no response to history without effort." D'Estaing's sage counsel was clearly inspired by the environment of human crises that defined his era. He was born during the First World War and fought in the second global conflagration.

The dilemma of conceptualising an appropriate response to the challenges that dog Nigeria's journey, with the concomitant imperative efforts capture the essence of the life and times of H.E. Arakunrin Oluwarotimi Odunayo Akeredolu, CON, SAN, the late governor of Ondo State who died at a hospital in Germany, on December 27.

Amid the contrived fog that needlessly surrounded the late governor's demise, his family broke their silence on the devastating passage, clarifying the governor died in his sleep at a hospital in Germany, on early December 27; stating he succumbed to death from complications arising from prostate cancer.

A statement issued by the late governor's son, Oluwarotimi Akeredolu Jnr, read: "With deepest regret and profound acceptance of the will of the Almighty, we announce the passing of our beloved, courageous, and compassionate father and grandfather, Arakunrin Oluwarotimi Akeredolu, SAN, CON.

"He peacefully departed in his sleep at a Hospital in Germany, where he was undergoing treatment for protracted prostate cancer.

"While we are deeply saddened and devastated by his departure, we find solace in the understanding that as he transitions to eternity, he will be guided by the benevolent hands of the angels of light, with whom he resided during his remarkable and fruitful journey on Earth.

"During this challenging time, we sincerely appreciate everyone who has stood by us and extended their support since the news broke. We humbly request your prayers and support, while also asking for privacy as we navigate through this trying period."

A distraught President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, in a statement he personally signed, described Akeredolu as a confidant and political soulmate.

In His Excellency's words, "It is a difficult task to have to pen a tribute and sing a dirge for a departing soul. It is a more difficult job in our African culture when one



...*The statesman who dared* Governor Akeredolu – 1956-2023

is compelled to do so for a younger person. Here I am with the difficult job of singing a dirge for Oluwarotimi Odunayo Akeredolu, my beloved brother, confidant, political soulmate and governor of Ondo State.

"I cannot fairly capture in words Rotimi's towering figure and his human essence. Rotimi was a man who moved our nation towards equity, fairness and justice in his strident advocacy against every form of injustice in our country through the instrumentality of the law as a senior advocate, attorney general of his beloved state, as President of the Nigerian Bar Association and Governor of Ondo State.

"In a challenging moment of our statehood when marauding agents of darkness spread their tentacles across our country, Rotimi was a strong voice in wilderness calling us to rethink our security architecture so we can have a more secure nation. His unrelenting advocacy led to the birth of the local police in the South West.

"Rotimi was a man of ideas and action. While he was with us, he taught us the power of action and service. In Ondo State where he had the honour to serve as the Governor in the last 6 years, he served his people with absolute loyalty, dedication and forthrightness.

An equally smitten chairman of the Nigeria Governors' Forum, NGF, His Excellency, Abdulrazak Abdulrahman, the Executive Governor of Kwara State, expressed the Forum's grief at the demise of the notable legal luminary and its fallen outspoken member and conveyed NGF's commiserations to his grieving family and state.

His words: "The deceased brought to the Forum his vast intelligence and experience as a lawyer, spanning several decades. His humane disposition and deep love for his people endeared him to all and sundry.

"His humility and non-partisan stance for national interest has endeared him to many. His valuable contributions and

interventions as a member of the Forum, at various instances, has moved the Forum to higher heights. He was a statesman and an embodiment of intellectual acuity.

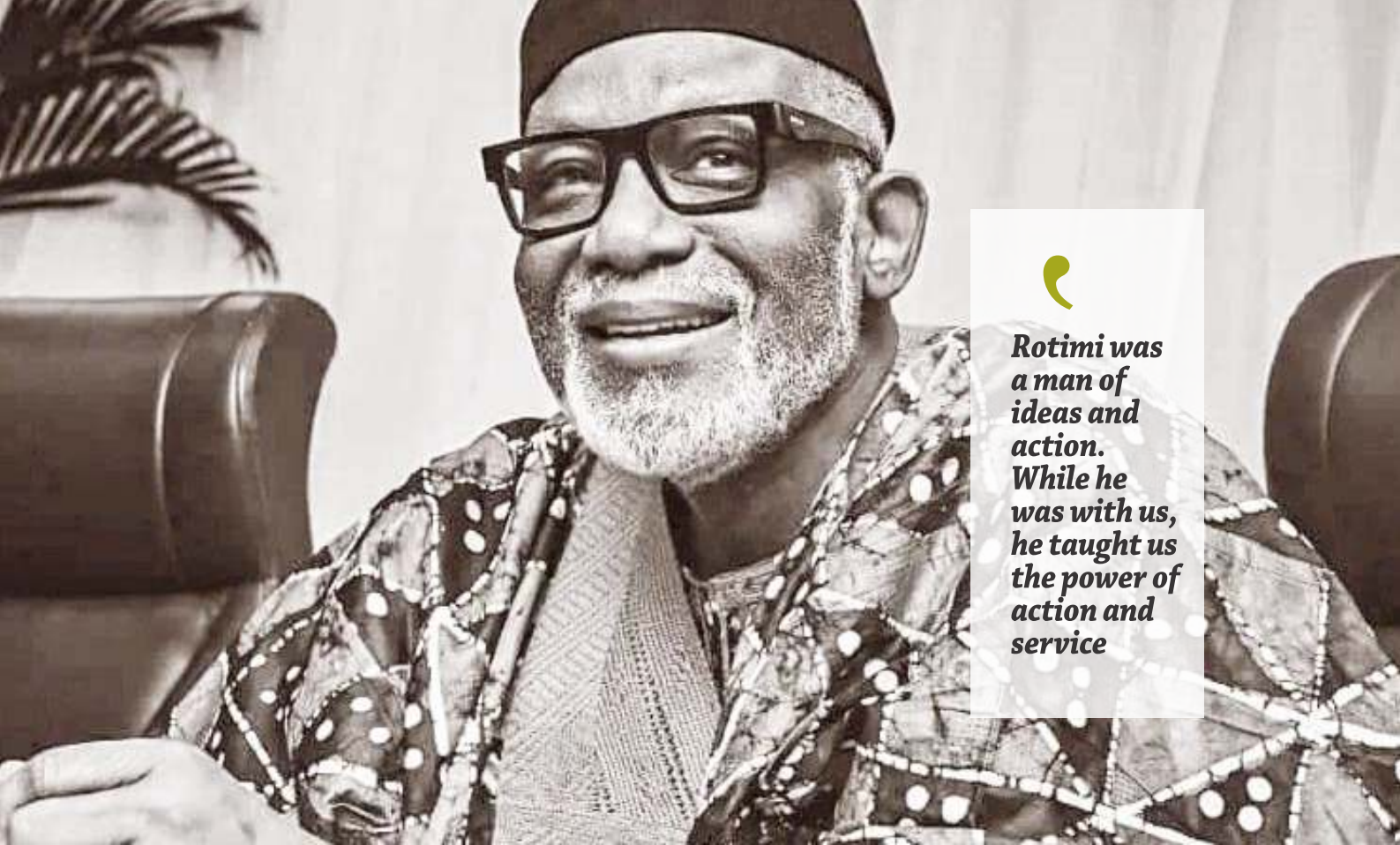
"We are indeed saddened by this irreplaceable loss and pray for the family and the entire people of Ondo State in this difficult time. May God in his infinite mercy ease your pain.

"We hope to find solace in our memory of his achievements and that his good deeds will live on. Aketi lived a good life, fought a good fight, and will forever be remembered as a hero."

At a period the world, Africa and Nigeria stand on the brink of substantial disruptions - and of considerable opportunity - as new political governance models challenge tradi-

Akeredolu was married to former Ondo State First Lady Betty Anyanwu-Akeredolu, a union blessed with children





Rotimi was a man of ideas and action. While he was with us, he taught us the power of action and service

tional playbooks, Akeredolu stood tall and spoke with an unforgettable authority and verve forged in furnace of stern professional training and conviction.

He brought vision, knowledge and courage to sustain the imperative cutting-edge leadership which had ensured both stability and progression at the subnational and national levels.

It's a given that powerful visions attract ideas, people and other relevant resources. They create the momentum and will to actualize changes. They inspire individuals, complementary organizations and institutions to commit, to persist and to give their best.

Keying into this enduring philosophy, unassuming Akeredolu had also deployed impeccable professionalism, discipline and persistence to change the traditional narrative of governance in Ondo State and also undeniably impacted the national space.

No less a child of providence who wielded influence and authority with alluring humility and exemplary focus, Aketi as he was fondly called, demonstrated with his life's trajectory that law, politics, faith, philanthropy and education fundamentally address transformation of society and the human condition for good.

He unabashedly maintained this unique footing till death. An unwavering sense of duty, rigorous training and professionalism, demonstrable integrity and almost a child-like faith in his beloved God formed the navigational compass of his life story.

A feisty crusader for constitutionalism, truth, justice who contributed in no small measure to the entrenchment and sustenance of democracy and the growth of the legal profession in Nigeria, Akeredolu impatiently rejected staying tamely at the

end of received policy prescriptions.

He coveted knowledge-driven innovations, proactive engagement with stake-holders, policy makers and sure-footed action. These progressive dimensions were boldly mirrored in his quality leadership of the several organizations he presided over. Some of these included: Attorney General of Ondo State, Chairman of the Legal Aid Council, the Nigerian Bar Association, NBA, Governor of Ondo State, Chairman of Southwest Governors' Forum, Managing Partner at the law firm of Olujinmi & Akeredolu, which he co-founded with Chief Akin Olujinmi, a former Attorney General and Minister for Justice of Nigeria.

H.E. President Bola Tinubu aptly captured some of Akeredolu's developmental impact at his subnational and national turfs when he observed in his eulogy: "His footprints dot the entire landscape in the hundreds of kilometres of roads he built, the many schools he built and healthcare facilities that he provided.

"During the dark hours when marauding agents of darkness visited the state and killed defenceless citizens where 40 worshippers of the Catholic Church of Owo were killed on June 5, 2022, Rotimi's leadership qualities as a true statesman and compassionate leader radiated brightly to



Governor Akeredolu – 1956-2023

the world.

“He was a mourner-in-chief who guided his people through an agonising period. Today, I mourn a fighter and fearless defender of truth and the masses.”

The NGF Chairman, H.E. Abdurahman AbdulRasak, echoed the president’s position, at a condolence visit to the late governor’s family at his Ibadan private residence on Wednesday, December 27. The Vice Chairman of the Forum and Oyo State Governor, H.E. Seyi Makinde, accompanied the Chairman to condole the deceased’s family.

Hear H.E. AbdulRasak: “We will just continue to pray that his soul rest in peace. May God give the family the fortitude to bear the loss, it is indeed a great loss for the nation.

“This is a man that has risen to the height of his chosen career. He was a Senior Advocate of Nigeria. He has risen to the height of politics. He was the governor of a state. He impacted greatly on humanity, developmental politics. All we can say for now is may his soul rest in peace.

“This is somebody who was a courageous individual. He doesn’t mince words; he says it as it is, he speaks truth to power. It is a big loss for me personally, and for the Southwest. We will still continue to internalize.”

Akeredolu was born on 21 July 1956 in Owo, to Reverend J. Ola Akeredolu of the Akeredolu family and Lady Evangelist Grace B. Akeredolu of Aderoyiju family of Igbotu, Ese Odo, in Ondo State. He started his primary education at Government Primary School in Owo. He proceeded to Aquinas College in

Akure, Loyola College in Ibadan and Comprehensive High School, Ayetoro, for his secondary school education and Higher School Certificate, respectively.

His middle name Odunayo means “Year of happiness” in Yoruba. He went on to the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) to study Law and he graduated in 1977. He was referred to the Nigerian Law School in 1978.

Akeredolu was appointed Attorney General of Ondo State from 1997 to 1999. In 1998, he became a Senior Advocate of Nigeria. He was Chairman of the Legal Aid Council (2005–2006). In a lecture in December 2009, Akeredolu said no amount of electoral reform or judicial system could give Nigeria free and fair elections if Nigerians themselves refused to take practical steps to ensure that their votes count.

He served as the President of the Nigerian Bar Association between 2008 and 2009. He was the Vice Chairman of the Ibadan branch of the NBA in 1991 and Chairman from 1992 to 1994.

In 2012, the Nigerian Bar Association named its new secretariat in Abuja after Akeredolu, its president citing the need for “generational identification and recognition of those who had contributed immensely to the development of the association. The sheer courage for him to go through the rigour is a testimony to his selfless service.”

On February 4, 2022, Akeredolu was named Grand Patron of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency by its chairman, retired Brigadier General Mohammed Buba Marwa

Akeredolu was married to former Ondo State First Lady Betty Anyanwu-Akeredolu, a union blessed with children.

Late H.E. Arakunrin Oluwarotimi Odunayo Akeredolu, CON, SAN, was truly the statesman who dared. He indeed bought unstintingly into the French president, Giscard D’Estaing’s timeless

counsel to statesmen and world leaders that: “There can be no response to history without effort.”

He walked his talk, till his last breath.

“ **This is a man that has risen to the height of his chosen career. He was a Senior Advocate of Nigeria. He has risen to the height of politics** ”

Socio-Economic Scorecard: Ogun Ranks 6th In Nigeria

Analysts Data Services and Resources has ranked Ogun State 6th out of 36 States and the FCT, in the just released Socio-Economic Scorecards of Nigerian States.

Ogun State, under the leadership of Governor Dapo Abiodun, came tops in the financial sector; third in capital importation; third again in industrialisation and business competitiveness; fifth in citizens' livelihood and welfare; fourth in ICT infrastructure and fifth in education.

In the area of the financial sector, Ogun State came tops with 65.6 per cent, followed by Kaduna with 62.4 per cent, while Oyo came third with 62.0 per cent.

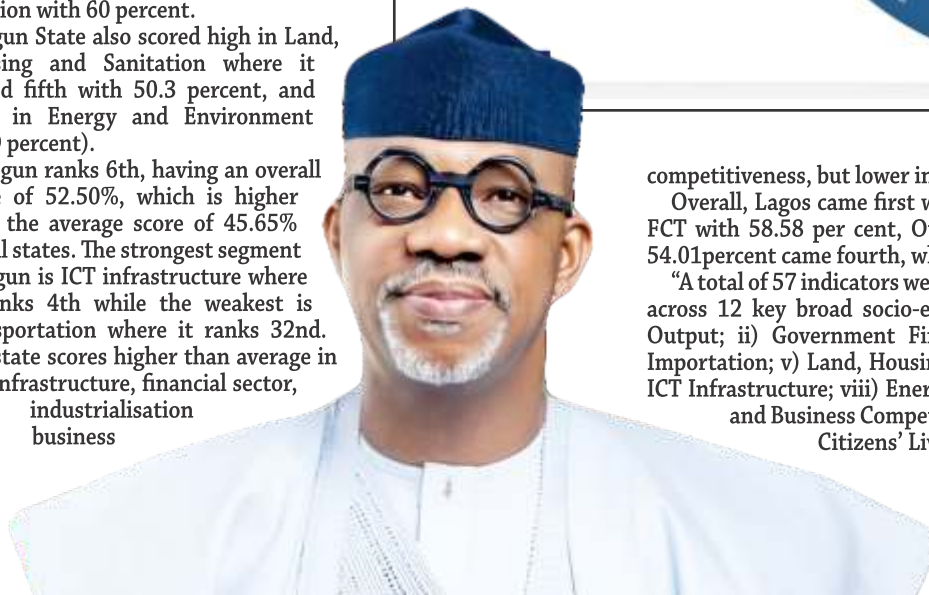
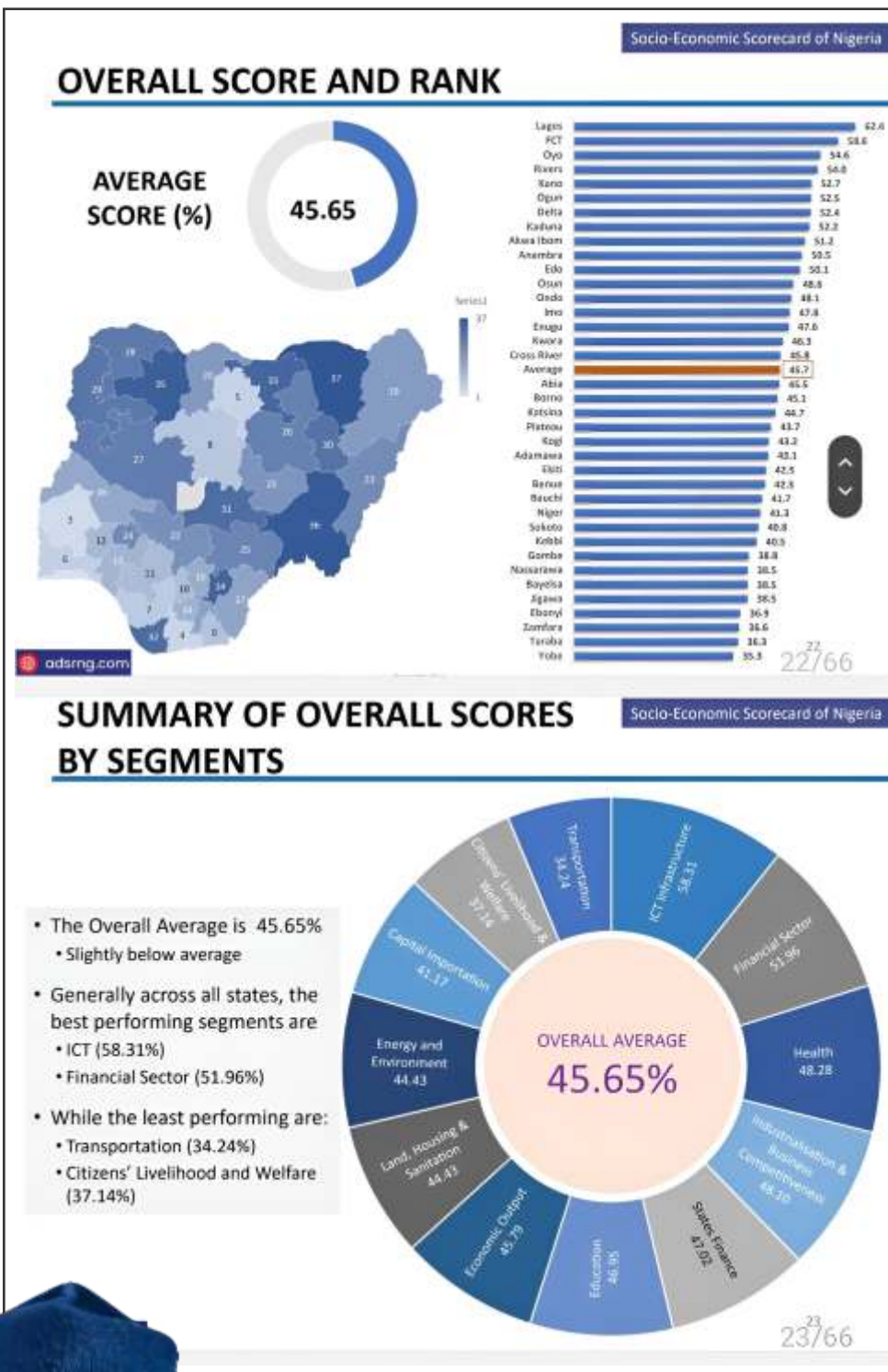
Ogun State came third in capital importation with 61.1 per cent. The State was only beaten by Lagos State, which came first with 68.7 per cent and FCT, 67.8 per cent.

Again, the Gateway State came third in industrialisation and business competitiveness with 61.5 per cent, behind Lagos State with 70.1 per cent and Oyo State, 62.9 per cent.

The state came fifth in citizens' livelihood & welfare with 53.7 per cent, while the state was placed fourth in ICT Infrastructure with 73.6 per cent. In education, the state secured the fifth position with 60 per cent.

Ogun State also scored high in Land, Housing and Sanitation where it placed fifth with 50.3 per cent, and 11th in Energy and Environment (48.9 per cent).

"Ogun ranks 6th, having an overall score of 52.50%, which is higher than the average score of 45.65% for all states. The strongest segment in Ogun is ICT infrastructure where it ranks 4th while the weakest is transportation where it ranks 32nd. The state scores higher than average in ICT infrastructure, financial sector, and industrialisation and business



competitiveness, but lower in other segments," it said.

Overall, Lagos came first with 62.38 per cent, followed closely by the FCT with 58.58 per cent, Oyo third with 54.61 per cent, Rivers with 54.01 per cent came fourth, while Kano came fifth with 52.65 per cent.

"A total of 57 indicators were used in the construction of the Scorecard across 12 key broad socio-economic segments; namely: i) Economic Output; ii) Government Finance; iii) Financial Sector; iv) Capital Importation; v) Land, Housing and Sanitation; vi) Transportation; vii) ICT Infrastructure; viii) Energy and Environment; ix) Industrialisation and Business Competitiveness; x) Education; xi) Health; and xii) Citizens' Livelihood and Welfare.

Journalists crucial. in crafting, shaping policies of govt – NGF DG

Journalists play a crucial role in crafting and shaping Nigeria's policies. They have the power to shed light on important issues, initiate public discourse, and hold policymakers accountable, hence poor messaging can derail a good policy of government, the Nigeria Governors Forum (NGF) has said.

The Director General of NGF, Asishana Okauru, noted this at the opening of a two-day training on 'Policy and Governance Reporting', organised by PREMIUM TIMES Academy and the Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF).

The Premium Times Workshop is the third in series in conjunction with the NGF with the first in 2019 dealing with "Budget Tracking and Data Driven Journalism" and the second one in 2021 was on the theme: Training for Journalists on Peace and Conflict- Sensitive Reporting.

The NGF DG said, "Your role as journalist is crucial in crafting and shaping policies. You could actually potentially derail a well thought out policy as a result of poor messaging. It is therefore extremely important we work together to better understand the policy value chain.

"For me, it would appear that in our environment, the implementation segment has been the weakest part of the entire policy value chain. This calls for patience and understanding.

"Those charged with the responsibility of executing policies in the country must show leadership, knowledge, integrity, accountability, and transparency especially at this time of major global happenings all around us.

"Here I am referring to the Israel-Hamas war; Russian-Ukrainian war and the attendant supply chain issues arising from these wars; the rise of extremism; world wide depression, climate change, UK has been hit by Brexit; technology particularly artificial intelligence (e.g. Chatgpt, etc)."

Okauru said the training will also afford sectorial heads to speak to participants, adding that "the Forum is essentially a policy hub and has done an excellent job in locating some of the most competent research minded hands to drive the work we do for our principals."

Managing Director/CEO, News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), Ali M. Ali, in his goodwill message, said the training programme was timely and well thought out.

Quoting the third President of the United States, Thomas Jefferson, who in stressing the critical role of the media in nation building, when in a moment of profound insight described it as more important than government itself!

"Were it left for me to choose whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without government, I shall not hesitate to choose the latter," Jefferson had said.

Ali said: "Jefferson's immortal quote readily defines the pivotal role



L-R: DIRECTOR-GENERAL/CEO OF VOICE OF NIGERIA (VON), JIBRIN NDACE, REPRESENTATIVE OF DIRECTOR GENERAL, NIGERIAN TELEVISION AUTHORITY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NEWS, AYO ADEWUYI, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF NIGERIA GOVERNORS' FORUM (NGF), ASISHANA OKAURU, MANAGING DIRECTOR/CEO, NEWS AGENCY OF NIGERIA (NAN), ALI M. ALI AND EDITOR-IN-CHIEF/CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER PREMIUM TIMES, MUSIKILU MOJEED, AT THE OPENING OF A TWO-DAY TRAINING ON 'POLICY AND GOVERNANCE REPORTING', ORGANISED BY PREMIUM TIMES ACADEMY AND THE NIGERIA GOVERNORS' FORUM (NGF)

the media, symbolised by the newspapers of his days, plays in everyday life.

"This is why today's two-day training programme on "Governance and Policy Reporting" organised by the Nigeria Governor's Forum in collaboration with Premium Times Academy is timely and well thought out", he said, commending the organisers for making available a worthy platform for manpower development in the media industry.

Ali added that the media is so impactful and it influences on daily lives that the Nigerian constitution makes specific provisions to protect and preserve "this institution which the British statesman, Edmund Burke, had described in 1787 as the Fourth Estate of the Realm.

"Section 22 of the constitution states that "The press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people."

The DG NAN noted that apart from the media, no other institution in Nigeria has been vested with this onerous constitutional responsibility of making government accountable to the people.

Those charged with the responsibility of executing policies in the country must show leadership, knowledge, integrity, accountability, and transparency especially at this time of major global happenings all around us

He said: "If the intent of the letters and spirit of this fundamental provision is to be dissected, it is clear that the framers of the constitution were interested in deepening the crucial role of the mass media in not only promoting our pluralist democracy and good governance but also ensuring that government upholds the objectives contained in the directive principles of state policy.

"Of critical importance is the provision which talks about ensuring that "the material resources of the nation are harnessed and distributed as best

as possible to serve the common good."

He added that also fundamental is that which talks about ensuring "that the economic system is not operated in such a manner as to permit the concentration of wealth or the means of production and exchange in the hands of a few individuals or a group."

He added that "It is clear from these provisions that the media has a role to play in promoting the economic wellbeing of Nigeria and its diverse people through good governance and adequate reportage of public policies.

"If there is agreement on this, how then can the media help in promoting good governance and by extension mitigate the current economic challenges in the country?"

"One such means is by focusing on development journalism which highlights the human condition and seeks measures to uplift standard of living through monitoring certain defined indicators.

"Development journalism seeks to create awareness about socio-economic issues and the development initiatives to tackle them.

"The media also has an important role to



play in promoting accountability and transparency in the conduct of government business.

“In this light, the media must remain in the vanguard of tracking the budgetary process to ensure that the Nigerian people get the actual value allocated in fiscal proposals.”

Director General, Nigerian Television Authority, Salihu Dembos, noted that citizens no longer trust the political leadership no matter how genuine they are.

Represented by Executive Director News, Ayo Adewuyi, he said the media has the responsibility to keep the citizens informed and educated on policies of government as well as keep those in government informed about the plight of citizens through investigative journalism.

Director-General/CEO of Voice of Nigeria (VON), Jibrin Ndace, on his part noted that training opportunities like that of Premium Times and NGF were what sharp his journalism career, urging participants not take the training for granted.

He assured that as the man in the helms of affairs, he is determined to ensure Nigerian stories are told to the world unapologetically.

“We should not allow the 0.5% give us a bad name. This is our country and we must responsibility to tell her story to the world.”

In his welcome remark, Editor-in-Chief/Chief Operating Officer

PREMIUM TIMES, Musikilu Mojeed, speaking on the importance of the training, said as the new crop of politicians assumes duties, journalists must prepare, including upping their skills, to report on them and their actions and policies.

“This course is built on the firm belief that the purpose of journalism is to serve society, just as the *raison d’être* of governance and policy reporting is to empower citizens with the

For the media to effectively work for the promotion of good governance and report governance more responsibly, there is a need to develop the capacity of journalists to do their jobs professionally

information they need to participate in civic affairs. We believe journalists should serve as watchdogs to ensure honest and productive governance while focusing their coverage on issues vital to advancing citizens and society.

“This training is therefore designed to help journalists with the skills they need to cover public policies, governance and the democratic process in Nigeria, Africa’s largest democracy. We believe governance and policy reporting should be informed by more profound knowledge and skill level of how governments work and how public policy decisions are taken. At the end of this training, we expect participants to develop deeper insights and understanding of the Nigerian system and how to deepen accountability in governance.

“For the media to effectively work for the promotion of good governance and report governance more responsibly, there is a need to develop the capacity of journalists to do their jobs professionally. We thank the Nigerian Governors Forum for including this activity in its Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives in the overall interest of the public.”

Mojeed said participants are expected to be “better informed and skilled reporters who understand the sensitivity and complexity of their duties and responsibilities in providing the right kind of information citizens and government need to make informed decisions;

“Have a better understanding of solution-driven and reporting on governance issues in line with the desire of citizens to have a prosperous, orderly and stable society.”

Obaseki Takes Edo Economic Summit To China, Woos Investors With Business-Friendly Reforms

The Edo State Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki, has continued his foreign investment drive, rallying investors to take advantage of the business-friendly environment and other incentives provided by his administration to invest in new frontiers and expand their businesses in the State.

The governor, on the sidelines of the Belt and Road Global Chambers of Commerce and Associations Conference, in Fuzhou, China, held an Economic Summit, to woo more investors into Edo State in line with the government's vision to drive economic growth and sustainability.

Fuzhou is the largest city in Fujian Province where, coincidentally, the majority of the Chinese companies operating in Edo State are headquartered.

The summit had over 180 foreign investors in attendance.

The governor at the forum showcased the impactful reforms and programmes implemented by his administration over the past seven years to attract and retain investments.

He noted that the reforms and programmes have impacted the civil and public service, education,

healthcare, infrastructure, transport, agriculture, technology, and social welfare sectors of the State's economy, placing the State as a frontier State for economic expansion.

According to him, "These initiatives encompass streamlining bureaucracy, implementing business-friendly policies, ensuring the availability of raw materials and energy, and fostering the development of the skilled workforce necessary for these enterprises."

Obaseki noted that Edo State has a fast-growing reputation as the energy and petrochemical hub of Nigeria which is a big attraction to potential Chinese investors with prospects of affordable gas exploration, urging the investors to take advantage of the business-friendly environment and other incentives provided by his administration to invest in new frontiers and expand their businesses in the State.

The session concluded with an interactive Question and Answer segment, during which potential investors posed questions to the governor and his delegation regarding the procedures for investing in Edo.



Edo Fertilizer Company Produces Over 80,000 Tonnes, Records N15bn Sales

The Edo State Fertilizer and Chemical Company, Auchi, has produced a total of 80,000 tonnes of NPK fertiliser and generated a total of N15bn in sales turnover.

The company was revived by the Governor Godwin Obaseki-led administration in 2017 with a Public Private Partnership (PPP) arrangement with WACOT Limited, an agro-input company.

A representative of Edo Fertilizer and Chemical Company, Alh. Sadiq Kazzim, at the Alaghodaro Summit in Benin City, the State capital, commended Governor Godwin Obaseki for creating an enabling environment for businesses to thrive in the State.

According to him: "Today, we produce 80,000 tonnes of NPK Fertilisers in Edo State and our sales turnover is over N15 billion. The company has the opportunity to serve other parts of the country, especially the North East due to insurgency as it is difficult to allow setting up fertilizers in that part of the country."

The fertilizer business drives a number of agriculture activities within the State and across the country, as it provides a steady supply of inputs to boost yields and improve food sufficiency.

The company also provides jobs to locals in Auchi, Etsako West Local Government Area of the State, reducing youth restiveness and supplying farmers with much needed supplies to boost food production in the area.



URBAN FLOODING: OYO GOVT DREDGES 8 FLOOD PRONE RIVERS, STREAMS



The Oyo State Government has dredged eight (8) additional flood prone rivers and streams across all geopolitical zones in the State.

This, according to the Government is to ensure flood risk reduction and put measures in place against flood incidences.

The Commissioner for Environment and Natural Resources, Arc. Abdulmojeed Mogbonjubola, led a team of Government officials on assessment visits to the dredged rivers.

The Commissioner, represented by the Director, Environmental Engineering, Engr. Oladipo Mukaila, noted that the visitation was crucial, so as to ascertain the level of works and provisional attainments on the projects.

He affirmed the preparedness of the Oyo State Government to prevent any occurrence of the fluvial flooding (Urban

Flooding) this year.

Recall that the Nigeria Hydrological Service Agency (NIHSA) and Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NIMET), in the Annual Flow Outlook (AFO), predicted that some States across the Federation (Oyo State inclusive) would experience fluvial flooding this year.

This has been happening in some States as predicted by both agencies.

The Commissioner highlighted that the newly dredged rivers and streams by include: Araromi river; 'Boroboro river; Isunwin stream in Oyo town;

'Ora/Laka' river in Ogbomosho; 'Jalugbe' Stream, Ilero; Telebu-Ayin-Opaleki River in Igboora, Ibarapa zone.

Others include: Ogba stream, Iseyin; Koba Stream, Ogboro road, Saki and Fedomu river Igbeji in Oke-ogun area of Oyo State.

The team, which includes officers from the Ministry of Environment, office of the Auditor-General of the State and Bureau of Public Procurement, was satisfied with the volume of work done to prevent flooding, which could have claimed lives and properties.

OYO GOVT ENCOURAGES WOMEN TO EMBRACE TECHNOLOGY, INNOVATION

The Oyo State Government has said it would continue to encourage women to develop keen interest in the study of Science, Technology and Innovation programmes for relevance.

The Commissioner for Women Affairs and Social Inclusion, Hon. Mrs. Toyin Balogun stated this during the graduation of 60 girls who had undergone courses in computer technology at the Oyo Tech Hub held at Technical Floor Kasali Elesan Building, Idi-Ope, Oyo town.

The Commissioner noted that in line with the present administration's agenda,



researchers and innovators will be protected with the appropriate legal framework.

According to Hon Balogun, the role of women is not limited to the kitchen and 'the other room', but when adequately skilled they can excel in their primary responsibilities.

She said, "Women are intelligent, beautiful and can work together to make the society better through impacting positively on their children and youths who are the future of tomorrow. If a woman is empowered, she will take care of her home and invariably reduce social deliquescence in the society".

She advised the girls not to limit themselves but emulate women of substance in the society who had paid their dues, such as Ada Lovelace who was the first female computer programmer.

Mrs. Toyin Balogun while assuring the Hub of Government's support, stressed that the Governor Seyi Makinde led administration is interested that women play more important roles in politics thereby surpassing the 35% women in inclusion, as suggested by the United Nations.

In his remarks, the Head Innovation and Technology, Oyo Tech Hub, Mr. Ibukun Atoro unveiled two outstanding trainees.

Gov Mai Mala Buni: Building a Stronger Post-Insurgency Yobe State

Over the course of the last four years, Governor Mai Mala Buni has created a slew of new government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to improve and consolidate on what his administration is doing to serve the people of Yobe State.

One of these MDAs is the Ministry of Wealth Creation, Empowerment and Employment Generation, which the governor established a little over two years ago.

After passing the initial set up phase, the Ministry hit the ground running with a business census across the 178 electoral wards of the state to streamline a register of micro, small, and medium businesses for the purpose of support by the state government.

To date, the Ministry had undertaken three different empowerment phases in which a variety of items and tools and cash support were given to largely small and medium business people across the state.

These include 100 Toyota Avensis cars given to members of the state branch of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) and others, big and small-sized grinding machines, vulcanizing machines, irrigation pumps for different farmer associations, barbershop kits, poultry and fishing kits, GSM handset repair kits and laptops, KEKE NAPEP and JEGA tricycles, etc.

In collaboration with the Sir Ahmadu Bello Memorial Foundation, the Ministry had also undertaken a train-the-trainer workshop, in which 50 existing small business persons, including mechanics, tailors, caterers, fish, poultry and livestock farmers, amongst others, were trained on soft business skills with a plan to later attach one trainee to each one of them so that they train those trainees for a period of one year.

At the end of the one-year period, it is planned that the Yobe State Government and the Sir Ahmadu Bello

Memorial Foundation would jointly provide starter kits to enable the trainees to set up their own small businesses. This is designed to reduce joblessness and enhance the capacity of youths to contribute meaningfully to the state's economy.

As a result of its empowerment activities, the Ministry of Wealth Creation, Empowerment and Employment Generation has further spurred economic activity across Yobe State and has given a sense of hope to numerous small businesses and individuals for whom the support provided by the Buni administration has meant so much.

Governor Buni has also established a contributory healthcare management agency called YSCHMA. The objective of this agency is to improve universal health coverage and access to cheap medical care.

As at September 2023, YSCHMA has enrolled a total of 276,228 beneficiaries from all nooks and crannies of the state. According to the YSCHMA Executive Secretary, Dr Babagana Tijjani, YSCHMA is poised to ensure that 75% of the entire people of Yobe State are enrolled by the end of 2024. Enrollees into the

YASCHMA scheme pay only 10% of the cost of medical care.

The Buni administration is also paying lots of attention to the education sector, working within limited resources to reverse years of devastation wrought upon the sector by the Boko Haram insurgency. A key focus of that attention is students' scholarships.

Records show that 38,183 Yobe students currently pursuing different academic courses in 53 institutions of learning across the country are receiving government scholarships. A total of 169 others are studying on government scholarships in 17 foreign countries while 233 are in India under the Buni Special Foreign Scholarships Scheme. The Buni administration has also sponsored 358 law students into the Nigeria Law School in three years and 874 others into the Arabic and French Village B. ED and NCE programmes.

The Buni administration is also paying lots of attention to the education sector, working within limited resources to reverse years of devastation wrought upon the sector by the Boko Haram Insurgency



Plateau Attacks: Governor Mutfwang Vows to Foster Regional Harmony As Governors Show Solidarity



Plateau State Governor, Barr. Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang has reiterated his commitment to collaborating with fellow North Central governors to champion peace, unity, and substantial development across the region.

In a heartfelt address recently during a condolence visit led by the North Central Governors' Forum, Governor Mutfwang expressed profound gratitude for the Forum's unwavering support following the recent tragic attacks in Bokkos, Mangu, and Barkin-Ladi Local Government Areas.

Highlighting the North Central's pivotal role as a unifying force within the nation, Governor Mutfwang underscored the region's wealth of natural resources, emphasizing their potential to benefit the entire nation.

In light of the prevalent armed banditry, terrorism, and criminal activities in the region, Governor Mutfwang urged for unified efforts to combat these challenges. He specifically called upon the Federal Government for assistance in dualizing critical gateway roads, Wamba-Panyam and Akwanga-Jos, crucial for security

operations in the North East.

The Forum's Chairman, Governor Engr. Abdullahi Sule, conveyed the heartfelt condolences for the tragic Christmas Eve attacks, highlighting Plateau as a true home for all Nigerians. Stressing the importance of identifying the root cause for a lasting solution, he expressed confidence in Governor Mutfwang's wisdom and courage to address the issue effectively.

Engr. Sule denounced the recent incident as an act of pure terrorism, advocating for the utilization of technology to apprehend perpetrators and curtail their activities within the North Central. He emphasized the collective responsibility of all Nigerians in addressing this pressing challenge.

Governors (Rev. Fr.) Hyacinth Alia of Benue State and Mohammed Umar Bago

of Niger State condemned the appalling act, urging unity to safeguard the collective destiny of the North Central populace. They advocated for increased investments in agriculture to harness the region's abundant natural resources.

In a gesture of solidarity and support, the North Central Governors collectively donated N100 million to aid surviving victims of the heartrending attacks.

Gbong Gwom Jos, Da Jacob Gyang Buba, commended the governors for their unity and implored them to prioritize the region's mineral resources for the prosperity and well-being of its people.

The visiting delegation, comprising top government officials, religious leaders, and traditional rulers, demonstrated a resounding display of unity and solidarity in the face of adversity.

Northern Governors' Forum Condemns Fresh Attacks on Plateau Communities

The Chairman of the Northern Governors' Forum and Governor of Gombe State, Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya, CON has described as reprehensible and heinous, the Christmas eve attacks on communities within Bokkos and Barkin-Ladi Local Government Areas of Plateau State.

The Governor, on behalf of the 19 Northern Governors, expressed deepest condolences to the affected families and communities as well as the government and people of Plateau State.

"It is reprehensible and disheartening to hear of the loss of over 100 hundred lives and destruction of properties that occurred during these attacks, especially during a time when residents were preparing to celebrate the festive season.

"Such acts of violence are not only cowardly but also run counter to the spirit of unity and coexistence that our region upholds".

"We must all prioritize peace and harmonious living in our communities. Now, more than ever, we must reaffirm our commitment to peaceful coexistence and solidarity regardless of

our differences.

"We must unite in our commitment to peace and security, and stand firm against all forms of violence and division", he remarked.

The Northern Governors' Forum Chairman commended Governor Caleb Mutfwang for his leadership and responsible handling of the situation in the aftermath of those attacks, assuring him that the Northern Governors stand united in solidarity with him in the face of adversity and will work together towards lasting peace in Plateau State.

He commended the security agencies operating in the area, and implored them to redouble their efforts in safeguarding the lives and property of the people, harping on urgent need for increased vigilance and swift action to ensure the safety of all citizens.

"It is imperative that those responsible for the heinous acts are swiftly apprehended and made to face the full weight of justice."

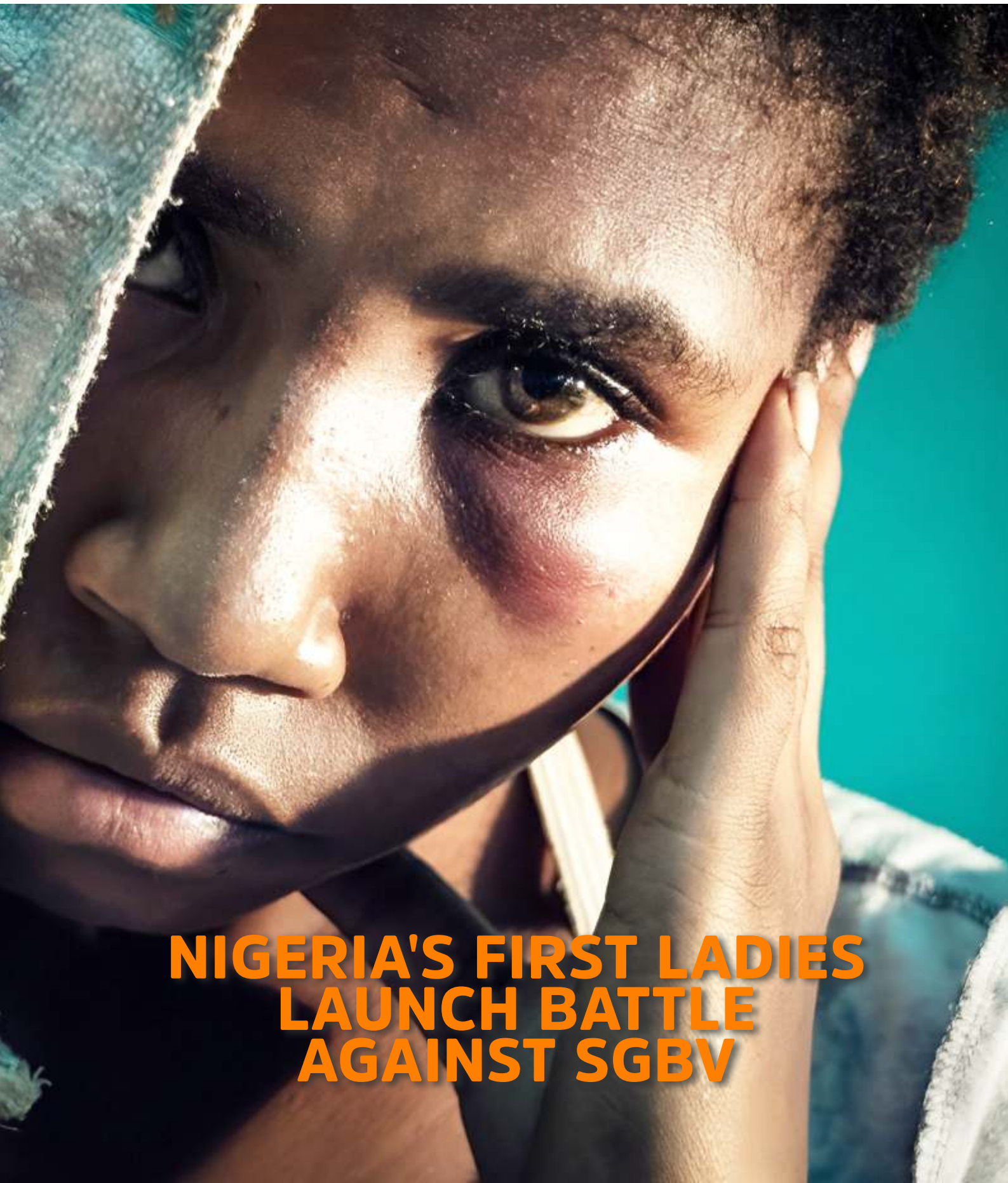
The Gombe State Governor urged members of the communities to remain vigilant and promptly report any suspicious activities to the security agencies for immediate intervention.

Gender *Issues*



Vol.1. No. 5 December 2023 Edition

...An NGSF monthly publication



**NIGERIA'S FIRST LADIES
LAUNCH BATTLE
AGAINST SGBV**



16 days of Activism against SGBV: Hajiya Lami canvasses proactive measures

The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is a global campaign that takes place every year from November 25th to 10th of December aimed at raising awareness about gender-based violence and advocating for the prevention and elimination of this problem that affects individuals worldwide.

This global campaign is a call to action, with this year's theme "UNITE! Invest to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls."

Her Excellency Hajiya Lami Ahmadu Fintiri emphasized the urgency and purpose behind the theme during a press briefing, highlighting the need for collective action to break the cycle of violence and create a safer world. She stressed that prevention is key, involving commitments of time, resources, and dedication to education and support systems. The focus is on addressing root causes, fostering awareness, and nurturing a culture of respect.

The wife of the Governor, Hajiya Lami called for a collective movement, urging stakeholders, including traditional and religious leaders, to join in spreading awareness, supporting initiatives, and advocating for policies that protect and empower women and girls.

She expressed her foundation's commitment, the Fresh Air Pro-Life Empowerment Foundation (FAPEF), to empower 20 survivors of GBV.

The foundation has played a role in the domestication of the VAPP law and actively supports survivors by paying their hospital bills.

Her Excellency Hajiya Lami Ahmadu Fintiri expressed her gratitude for the hard work and devotion of our development partners, especially UNFPA, who have made it possible for GBV issues to be resolved and offenders to face justice in Adamawa State.

The Commissioner of Women Affairs and Social Development commended Hajiya Lami's dedication, considering it a beacon of hope for those affected by GBV in Adamawa State. Development partners, especially UNFPA, were recognized for their support in resolving GBV issues and bringing offenders to justice.



Abia First Lady sets up SGBV referral centres

The wife of Abia State Governor, Priscilla Otti has pledged to put up a workable action plan in collaboration with the state Ministry of Women Affairs to domesticate Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, SGBV policy thrust of the Nigeria Governors' spouses forum by ensuring that gender-based violence becomes a thing of the past in Abia.

Mrs Otti stated this at the ongoing 4th annual conference of the Nigeria Governors' spouses forum, held at Abuja, to mark the 16 days of activism on sexual and gender-based violence, adding that she is now better informed and equipped on positive ways of eradicating sexual and gender-based violence in the society.

According to her, "the theme of the conference 'Youth Allies: Bridging Generations to End Violence' elicits interest not only to end gender-based violence but to empower women, create cancer awareness, provide shelter for women and the girl child, and set up referral centers where victims can seek redress and be rehabilitated".

The Governor's wife who revealed that part of her take home from the conference was the need to curb the menace in the state, noted that of particular interest to her is the introduction of a

mobile court to try offenders and get justice for victims of sexual and gender-based violence and warn those fueling harmful practices that expose women and the girl child to violence to desist from the act henceforth.

She commended the chairman of the Nigeria Governors Forum, Gov. Abdulrahman Abdulrazak of Kwara state, for his immense support to the Nigeria Governors' Spouses Forum, especially in the area of establishing a mobile court.

In her address, the chairperson of the forum and first lady of Kwara state, Professor Olufolake Abdulrazak, said it was the time to engage youth allies in building generations to end gender-based violence.

Professor Olufolake explained that the Nigeria Governors' Spouses Forum has, in the last four years, actively engaged in advocacies and plausible engagements, partnerships, and collaborations towards ensuring that Nigerian women and girls are positioned to harness their full potentials while leading sensitization and awareness to mitigate concerns on sexual and gender-based violence in Nigeria.

"Owing to the spike in incidents of sexual and gender-based violence during the lockdown occasioned by the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020, we have amplified advocacies that led to the declaration of a state of emergency on gender-based violence.

"It has become imperative that young people have to be inculcated with these values hence the theme of the

2023 conference 'Youth Allies: Bridging Generations to End Violence' gives credence to our resolve to continue to deepen engagements, collaboration, and partnerships," she said.

Also in her speech, the Minister for Women Affairs, Hon. Uju Ohaneye, disclosed that a lot of money has been voted for advocacies in the past but now we are expediting action by instituting a mobile court to address these issues and putting an end to gender-based violence in the country.

At the interactive section, some of the panelists, Activist Onyeka Onwenu, Movie producer Mrs. Joke Silva, Dr. Saudatu Mahdi of women's rights advancement and protection alternative (WRAPA), and Dr. Kemi Da Silva Ibru, narrated their experiences and advocated for civil and moral reorientation of the youths at the earliest stage. They called on the Nigerian government to do more by eradicating sexual and gender-

based violence in the country.

Mrs. Otti later visited the United Nations building in Abuja where she assured them of Abia state commitment in the fight against gender-based violence. She also joined her counterpart to sign a memorandum of understanding with Unicef on a partnership compact to eliminate violence against women and girls.

This compact, she explained, outlines priority actions to enhance birth registration, enforce legal frameworks, and improve access to quality health services. It is also a commitment to collaborate for change led by the Nigeria Governors' Spouses Forum, government agencies, civil society organizations, and communities to combat violence.

SGBV CHALLENGE:

Don't Just Man-Up, Speak Up

– AMB. OLUFOLAKE ABDULRAZQAQ

On the sidelines of the commemoration NGSF's 4th Annual Conference, the Chairperson of NGSF Ambassador, Prof. Olufolake Abdulrahman Abdulrazaq, the First Lady of Kwara State, granted an interview to of The Executive Summary, **HAJIYA HALIMA AHMED** providing succinct insights into the SGBV challenge, the renaming of 'governors' wives forum' and what ambassadors bring to the table.

Significantly, 'Colour Orange,' representing a future free from violence against women and girls was the colour of the day as Nigerian governors' wives whose association is now renamed Nigeria Governors Spouses' Forum, NGSF, once again commemorated their 4th Annual Conference by canvassing against Sexual and Gender Based Violence, SGBV. This was on December 4 2023, at the Transcorp Hilton, Abuja.

With the collaboration of the Nigeria Governors' Forum, NGF, UN Women, UNICEF, Ford Foundation, MacArthur Foundation, British High Commission, Save the Children, Baobab for Women's Right, and Women Radio, the conference this time around was not to only mark the Global 16 days Campaign against SGBV, but also to endorse a call to action by UN women and sign an MOU with UNICEF on GBV & Harmful Practices.

The event was highly successful and was well attended. His Excellency, Mallam Abdulrahman Abdulrazaq, NGF chairman and Kwara State governor, the First Ladies, UN, EU reps, Minister of women affairs, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of State FCT, celebrities from the entertainment industry and survivors were all there to share their experiences, swap stories on the work they are doing to combat GBV. The UN Deputy Secretary General gave a goodwill message amongst other distinguished guests.

Statistically, boys hardly feature in most SGBV narratives. Does it mean that this gender is immune to the scourge?

When you talk about boys in gender based violence, we know that 90% of cases involve girls and women but we also know that there are about 10% of men and



Her Excellency, Amb. Olufolake Abdulrazaq

boys. A lot of the time, boys do not speak out because the society makes them believe that because they are boys, they shouldn't talk about such things. They are expected to man up.

So they suffer in silence. Also men do not want to admit that they were the object of sexual based violence so a lot of the time. They are even more silent than girls and women. So we have to make sure that we continue to do the advocacy so that men know that they are involved and that they can speak up too.

Wives are now spouses. Tell us about the recent change to the erstwhile 'Nigeria Governors' Wives Forum,' now renamed Nigeria Governors Spouses Forum?

With regards to our name, now reflecting Nigeria Governors Spouses' Forum, we have been to so many places around the world. We joined the governors in September to have some side events during the United Nations General Assembly. We were proud to be one of the Nigerian contingents that went in our own capacity

A lot of the time, boys do not speak out because the society makes them believe that because they are boys, they shouldn't talk about such things. They are expected to man up

This is also one of the reasons we went to New York in September even though our theme at that time was trade and using basic needs to put Nigeria on the world map. What we are doing about basic needs and reaching the grassroots. We also talked about the other things we are doing including sexual and gender based violence.

This was well received. We were able to visit the State of New York and the Mayor of New York. We also visited the UN building and we saw the Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations, we saw

some ambassadors and other stakeholders.

Back in the country, we enjoy support from quite a few country ambassadors who support us and we are very grateful for that support. We know that this means that all we do are being reported and Nigeria's effort at all these events are being recorded by various countries and that's what an ambassador brings to the table.

The international sphere is very important because we may do a lot of things locally but we also need to amplify what we do to the international community.

If we are doing things in Nigeria and people abroad do not know, it is important that we let them know so that we can be reflected accurately at the international stage, in the news and on the different charts around the world that are being compiled.

The chairperson of the NGF got a huge applause for what he has been doing regarding gender and main streaming, making sure that women are in government and are playing active roles in other spaces.

We did the 6-months maternity leave as one of the means to enhance child nutrition in Kwara and a few other states. That is one of our advocacies now to make sure that more states can come and adopt the 6-month maternity leave in which ever form that they can do it even if it's 4 months active maternity leave and 2 months remote working.

We know that this would help the nutrition of our children and the chairman has taken that up together with about 7 other states. So the governor has "walked the talk" and that's why he is a "He for She" and decorated a lot wherever he goes and we are very proud of that.

I always say never be shy to write or walk up to any office that you think you want to be involved in. We have our offices. You can write to either the NGF or the NGSF. They can visit our active libraries and other resource rooms and see more of what we are doing. You can as well walk up to a state facility and give your suggestions on more things that could be done to improve our society. We will be very happy to have you on board.

In the last two to three years, we have adopted the Rape Act and the Childs Right Law and it's all just been amazing. There are supports from religious organizations, traditional institutions and other facets of the society. This showed us that the topic is very relevant and people are ready to adopt it.

as first ladies. We also had a side event in our own right.

A lot of the time, people say, "Oh its Nigeria Governors Spouses' Forum". A year ago at our conference, someone suggested that to reflect the 21st Century, you really need to be using spouses' forum unless you're saying that there can never be a man that can join us.

Obviously, we know that there is the possibility that there could be a female governor at some point in time so our name has to reflect that inclusivity.

It is important that we are seen as inclusive and seen as fair. You know, we are talking about gender based violence; so we must not do anything that looks like we are restricting any gender from chasing their ambitions.

You're an Ambassador. What do Ambassadors bring to the table?

Everyone has applauded the fact that being an ambassador or a diplomat has helped in trying to ensure that other countries are aware of what Nigeria is doing. I am able to call on other colleagues from other states and other countries to ensure they are aware of what Nigeria is doing.



16 days of Activism

A'lbom Governor's wife reads riot act to rapists, paedophiles, women abusers

Wife of Akwa Ibom State Governor and Chairperson of the State Gender Based Violence Management Committee, Pastor Patience Umo Eno has given a quit notice to rapists, paedophiles and abusers in the state.

Pastor Eno gave the quit notice to abusers of children and women in the state on Saturday, November 25, 2023, in Uyo in her speech during the flag-off of the 16 Days Activism Against Gender Based Violence in the State.

The governor wife declared that henceforth, it will not be business as usual and called on all hands to be on deck in her quest to rid the State of all forms of gender based violence.

She frowned against rape and molestation and insisted that these crimes must not be treated with kid gloves.

Pastor Eno vowed that anyone found to be a rapist or shielding rapists and paedophiles would be made

No one should feign ignorance when the law catches up with him or her

to face the full wrath of the law.

"I am here today as the Chairperson of this Committee to flag-off this 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence in the State. Henceforth, it will not be business as usual. I am calling on our men to support this advocacy by saying no to rape and all forms of abuse against women and the girl-child. Let's put a stop to this menace," the First Lady said.

She asked parents not to cave in when being pressured, but rather to demand and stand for justice, averring that the state government through the GBV management committee has put in place measures to curb the ugly trend.

Pastor Eno explained that the '16 Days Activism' was an advocacy targeted at raising awareness on the alarming rate of rape and abuse in the society, saying, "no one should feign ignorance when the law catches up with him or her."

Earlier, the Secretary of GBV Committee, Barrister Emem Etteh stated that the flag-off walk for the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence is a demonstration against GBV in the state and the world.

Akwa Ibom State has always been in the front line against perpetrators of rape and will not relent to be a voice against GBV, she said.

On hand to lend their voices to the campaign were the State Deputy Governor, Senator Akon Eyakenyi, former Deputy Speaker of the State House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. Felicia Bassey, Wife of the SSG, Dr. Inemesit Uwah and a host of others.

The walk which started off at the waterfront, Nwainba road by Four lanes, went through Nwainba down to the University of Uyo main campus.

The female youths, traditional leaders, religious leaders, women groups and civil society organisations were all in attendance.

Mrs Sanwo-Olu Restates Commitment to Stamp-out SGBV



The First Lady of Lagos State, Dr. Claudiana Ibijoke Sanwo-Olu has re-stated her commitment to the implementation of various initiatives aimed at stamping out Gender-Based Violence (GBV), especially against women and children in the State.

Dr. Sanwo-Olu gave the re-assurance when she led a group of secondary school students on an educational tour of the University of Lagos (UNILAG) on Monday, December 4, 2023. The tour was part of activities lined up for the State's 2023 Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Sensitization Program.

The Program is in commemoration of the Global Sixteen (16) Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, a major international event to call for an end to violence against women and girls. It commenced on November 25 (the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women) and it will run until December 10, 2023 (International Human Rights Day).

The students, selected from the Alausa, Ikeja axis of the State, explored various facilities and places within the university campus including the iconic Senate House, resource warehouse: UNILAG Main Library, historic J.F Ade-Ajayi Auditorium, serene

This is with the view to ensuring eradication of the menace of violence against women and girls in our dear State

Professor Adeotunbo Babatunde Sofoluwe Park, contemporary UNILAG Fire Station, and first campus radio station in Nigeria, UNILAG Radio 103.1F.M.

During the visit to UNILAG Radio 103.1F.M, one of the highlights of the tour, the students had the opportunity to observe how a campus radio station operates. They gained insights into media production and broadcasting while learning about communication and dissemination of information to a wider audience.

In an interactive session on the mid-day belt of the campus radio station, Dr. Sanwo-Olu explained the significance of this year's program themed: Invest to Prevent Violence against Women & Girls. She underscored the need for Nigerians to embrace the essence of the campaign to rid the society of GBV.

The UNILAG Alumna explained that the visit is part of efforts to sensitize students, in the quest to frontally stamp out all forms of Gender-Based Violence (GBV), especially against women and children in communities across the State.

Her words, "Essentially, we are here to unveil activities we have lined up in furtherance of the Lagos State Gender-Based Violence Week designed to scale up awareness and galvanize action. This is with the view to ensuring eradication of the menace of violence against women and girls in our dear State."



SCENES FROM
Nigeria Governors' Spouses' Forum Annual Conference



NGF NEWCOMERS

Shina Ayotola

Shina boasts 16 plus years in banking, contributing significantly to Access Bank, Polaris Bank, Resource Intermediaries Limited, and Sequoia Group.

His dynamic and results-driven reputation thrives from his tenure in these esteemed institutions.

A proponent of teamwork, he excels in collaborative environments, blending exceptional leadership and managerial skills. His adaptability and strategic acumen navigate complex business terrains, delivering tangible outcomes.

He inspires young professionals, emphasizing dedication, perseverance, and continuous learning for remarkable success. With an open-book ethos, he shares insights and guidance, impacting all who cross paths with him, embodying his life principle for the betterment of others.



Isinguzo Collette

Collette graduated from the University of Nigeria Nsukka, majoring in English/Literary Studies and History & International Relations, completing her studies in 2011.

With over 8 years of dedicated experience, Miss Collette thrives as an Enthusiastic Customer Service Specialist. Proficient in handling challenging customer interactions, she also possesses over a year of expertise in operations management.

Presently, she serves as the Technical Assistant to the Director General of the Nigeria Governors' Forum. Her responsibilities encompass providing crucial administrative and executive support to the Director General.



Matthew Ayeni

Matthew Ayeni is a professional photojournalist at the Nigeria Governors' Forum. He is a graduate of Obafemi Awolowo University (B.Sc Demography and Social Statistics, PGD International Relations).

Mr. Ayeni has a strong passion for capturing moments, telling stories through pictures, he also has professional knowledge in videography and a good command of French, as his second language. He enjoys reading, playing video games at his leisure time.



June Ifebe

June Ifebe is a social media manager with half a decade experience on various digital platforms. she has a BA degree in Mass communication from the University of Nigeria Nsukka where she majored in the new media, advertising and PR.

Miss Ifebe has also taken certificate courses in UI/UX, digital advertising and marketing from which she is able to execute her role as a social media manager. Her other skills include content creation, mobile videography, and community management.



2023:

The Food Security Challenges in Nigeria

By Prof Abba Gambo

Food Security is defined as the availability and affordability of Food, in a balanced form. The year 2023, had some myriad of security issues which affected national food security directly and indirectly.

Terrorism tops the list, with terrorists dictating who goes to the farm, when and even to the extent of imposing "harvesting fees" before farm produce are harvested.

The Nigerian Military confirmed that 6,880 terrorists were killed in 2023, with 6,770 apprehended. Several more are out there still capitalizing on their nefarious trade.

The recent killing of about 140 people (mostly Farmers) in 20 communities (all rich Agricultural areas) in Bokkos and Barkin Ladi Local Government areas of Plateau State has further changed the food security narrative. Similar incidents occurred severally in Kebbi, Sokoto, Zamfara, Katsina, Niger, Kaduna and Borno States.

The ESN/IPOB phenomenon still exists in the South-East region, no going to farms on Mondays. The South – West and the South – South are relatively peaceful, though, constant skirmishes occur among farmers/pastoralists.

The Nigerian Metrological Agency's (NiMET) prediction for the farming season 2023 was almost absolutely true. The rains started early. In most parts of the country, farmers rushed to their farms to plant and the rains ceased abruptly. There is nothing more painful to a farmer than the total loss of seeds. Seeds are held in high esteem,

protected heavily and prayed for assiduously. This became the first indicator of a looming food crisis in Nigeria.

The Agricultural value chain is the same the world over. A quick checklist would include land clearing, land preparation, planting, first weeding, fertilizer application, second weeding, pests and disease control, effective and efficient water management systems, real care, as in the case of a couple getting their very first baby.

Then the value-chain started disintegrating, tractors became a mirage across the country for land preparation (both harrowing and ploughing); the high cost of diesel from N2000/litre to almost N9000/litre, changed drastically the usual Tractor Hiring Service of N7,500/hour to about N30,000/hour.

NPK 15:15:15, SSP and Urea (all in 50kg bags) sold for N8,000 to N9,000 last rainy season. Today, according to Most Distinguished Senator Mohammed Bima, the former Chairman, Senate Committee on Agriculture, is N35,000.00, depending on availability and closeness to the ruling



parties in the states.

With the above scenario, farmers remobilized back to the farms, with Animal Traction, (Animal Powered Mechanization) Camels, Cows, Donkeys and in very frightening cases for the first time, use of hefty men to pull the ploughs! Seeds borrowed from family and friends, or from seed vendors, or freely given by strong in-laws. The rains came again, and the planting season began, for the second time in earnest. Excellent germination, almost 95% were recorded across most farms.

Then the scramble for fertilizer; most soils are "tired" in Nigeria due to our intensive subsistence system of cropping, year-in-year-out. Farmers became desperate, since Chemical Fertilizers are beyond reach, alternatives were sourced in organic manure, cow dungs, poultry droppings, abattoir refuse, and even home refuse became a gold mine. A 50kg bag of cow dung sells for N10,000.00; for poultry, it goes from N12,000.00 – N15,000.00 location dependent. The price for human waste became difficult to quantify.

The introduction of the above organic wastes on to the soils came with its own disadvantages, introduction of new crop varieties (now weeds, since unwanted) new pests and disease, and undegradable materials (plastics, pieces of tyre, bags of sachet water, the ubiquitous black nylon bags, which all contribute to disruption in crop growth through infringement of soil microorganic activities, aeration and general edaphic ecosystem.

Then the army worms emerged, very active and highly gregarious, from beneath the plants, devouring the whole canopy in a matter of minutes.

The control came with further frustrations, chemicals

The rains came again, and the planting season began, for the second time in earnest. Excellent germination, almost 95% were recorded across most farms

Zeropest, Fixit-Ga, Curator-Ga all usually recommended for the control of army worms became exorbitant, with adulteration and counter-fakes. Some farmers resorted to the use of wood ash, kerosene and even a mixture of PMS, the worms got killed and so also the crops.

In the North Western part of the country, Kebbi, Sokoto, Zamfara, Katsina axis, the rains came early and some grains like millet, maize and rice have already started tassling (the grain filling process), then the grasshoppers and the red beaked birds (Quela) came calling. Colossal damage was done to most farms in the affected States. With already

estimated 59% post-harvest loss in Nigeria, State governments should be advised to mop up food for the strategic Grain Reserve systems.

The above scenario, is further escalated by the crazy insecurity across the country. New levies surfaced-Farm Going- Fee, Farm Inspection Fee, and the most outrageous "Harvest Fee".

The NBS released the Food inflation rate for the Q4 of 2023 at 31.5%, the highest ever in recent history.

May the year 2024 usher in peace and prosperity for all Nigerians.

May the Agricultural sector grow in manifolds and our subsistence and large scale farmers be well protected in 2024.

Strengthening Fiscal Transparency, Accountability, Sustainability, and the Ease of Doing Business at the Subnational Level

By Olanrewaju Ajogbasile

1.0 Strengthening States Fiscal Transparency, Accountability and Sustainability

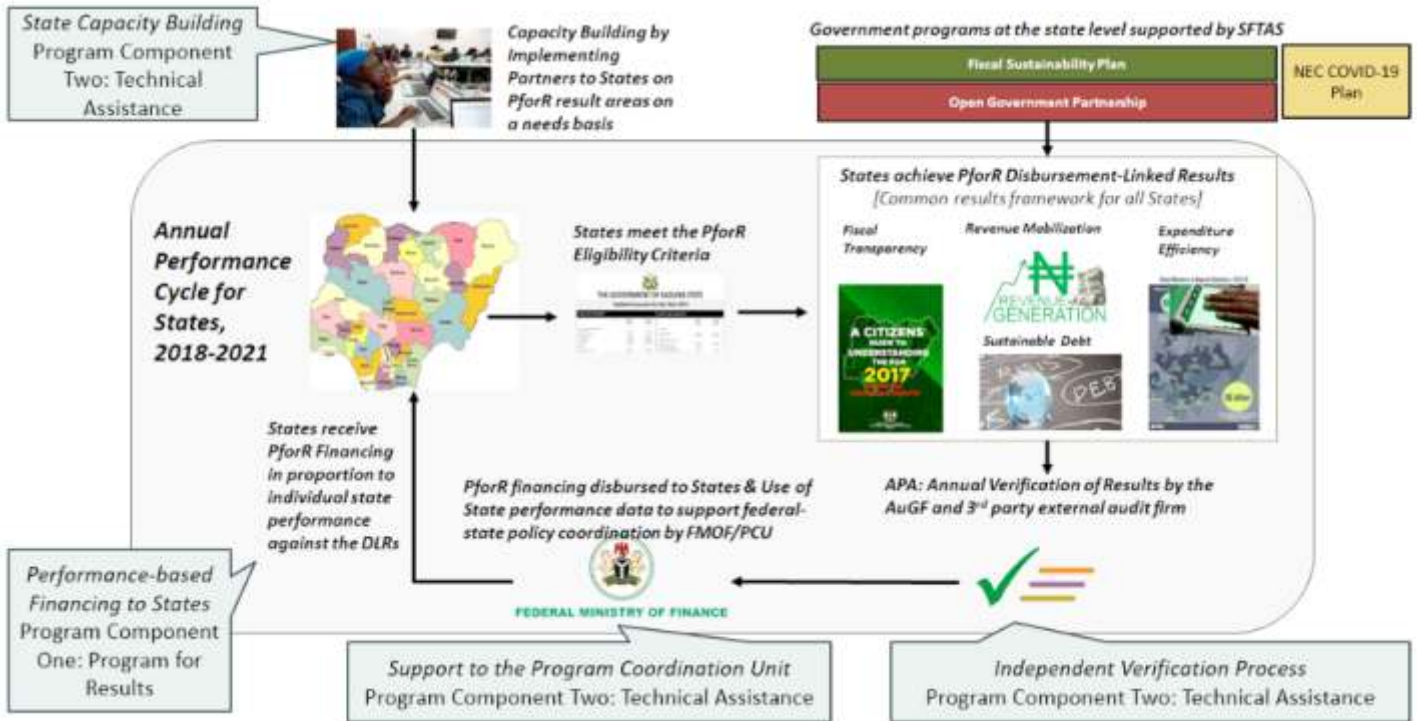
Nigeria, a federation of 36 States and 774 local governments had slipped into a recession in 2015, pushing many of the subnational governments into fiscal distress. This required the Federal Government to bailout States and provide fiscal relief including the restructuring of short-term loans into longer-term State bonds, provision of Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) loans and Excess Crude Account-backed loans. The impact of the recession was not unexpected given the low levels of internally generated revenues of States vis-a-viz rising expenditures and liabilities at the time, likewise the heavy dependence on monthly statutory transfers from the Federation Account which is highly susceptible to oil production and price volatilities.

As States' fiscal situation worsened in 2016, it became imperative to introduce conditional facilities that will motivate a common set of fiscal behavior aimed at improving fiscal transparency, accountability, and sustainability among the States of the Federation. Consequently, the Federal Government provided a second bailout package (Budget Support Facility - BSF) accompanied by a 22-point Fiscal Sustainability Plan (FSP) advocating reforms aimed at strengthening fiscal resilience and sustainability of States. The FSP was anchored on five (5) strategic objectives – to improve accountability and transparency, increase public revenue, improve public financial management, and achieve sustainable development. Similarly, the Government introduced anti-corruption institutional and legal reforms, transparency, and accountability initiatives under its Open Government Agenda. Although State governments showed strong progress across most of the reform actions except for fiscal accountability and transparency, improvements were not sufficient to shore up revenues above pre-2015 level even with higher statutory transfers that followed higher oil prices.

Also, the Federal Government was unable to sustain the conditionality of the BSF on compliance with the FSP reform actions, following mounting economic and political pressures. While the Federal government eventually disbursed to 35 States (excluding Lagos State), it remained crucial that State governments strengthen their fiscal management and sustainability beyond current levels, especially with levels of fiscal deficits and elevated debt-to-revenue ratio (2016 – 2017). Low internally generated revenue of States is not unconnected with the general lack of trust that emanates from years of poor fiscal management, accountability and transparency evidenced by the Open Budget Index (OBI) which ranked Nigeria in the bottom quartile on fiscal transparency.

To drive the objective of encouraging a common set of fiscal behavior aimed at fiscal transparency, accountability, and sustainability among the States of the Federation, the Federal Ministry of Finance Budget and National Planning (FMFBNP) in collaboration with the World Bank developed a four-year (2018 – 2022) Program for Results (PforR) facility worth US\$1.5 billion called the States Fiscal Transparency, Accountability and Sustainability (SFTAS) PforR. The program combined selected actions from the Fiscal Sustainability Plan (FSP), Open Government Partnership (OGP) agenda and in 2020 and the NEC COVID-19 Response Plan, to form its Disbursement Linked Results (DLRs) which States were to meet to access funds. The FMFBNP decided to 'on grant' the PforR financing to States. This significantly increased the incentive that the program provided to the States (noting that the financial assistance packages from FGN prior to this were loans to the States).

Program Design



SFTAS Program Result Chain

SFTAS4 Key Result Areas	Baseline State Fiscal Performance	Interventions Outputs	Intermediate Outcomes	Outcomes	SFTAS PDO
Increase Fiscal Transparency and Accountability	Very weak fiscal transparency and accountability: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> State budgets & financial statements are mostly not published Budget deviation high: 30 to 55% Citizens not engaged in budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key state budget and financial documents published online: state budget, state audited financial statements, quarterly budget implementation report (EC, DL#1), recovery expenditures and audit reports and financial statements of all LGs (DL#10) Public consultations on the state budget and citizen budgets & accountability reports online (DL#2) Enactment and implementation of the State Audit Law (DL#10) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved budget reliability (DL#1) Increased citizens' engagement in the budget process (DL#2) Enhanced transparency and accountability of funds in the COVID-19 response and resilient recovery phases (DL#10) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved overall fiscal transparency and accountability (EC, DL#1, DL#2, DL#10) 	Strengthen the fiscal transparency accountability and sustainability in the participating States, including in the context of the COVID-19 response
Strengthen Domestic Revenue Mobilization	Limited IGR collection but high growth potential <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk of revenue leakages high Only 6 states have IGR taxcode Huge deviation among states in IGR collection effort and outturns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Functional state-level TSA established based on a formal cash management strategy and with a single revenue account (DL#3) Consolidated tax code covering all states IGR sources approved and published (DL#4) Announced and implemented tax compliance relief program for taxpayers and business (DL#11) End the practice of contracting out PIT assessment and collection to private consultants (DL#11) Updated property records of at least 50% of all properties in urban areas (DL#11) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved cash management and reduced revenue leakages through State TSA (DL#3) Increased certainty and transparency for taxpayers (DL#4) Provided structured tax relief in response to COVID-19 and strengthened non-oil tax collection in the resilient recovery phase (DL#11) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) Collection (DL#4) 	
Increase Efficiency in Public Expenditure	Recurrent spending pressured; inefficiencies in spending <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many states have done biometric capture but not linked to payroll Procurement systems lack transparency and are inefficient 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biometric and BVN data is linked to payroll by states (DL#5) States public procurement law approved and state procurement agencies inaugurated; E-procurement piloted in state MDAs; Open contracting standards adopted by states (DL#6) Established procurement guidelines for COVID-19 or emergency situation and guidelines to facilitate SME participation (DL#12) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biometric and BVN data used to reduce payroll fraud (DL#5) Increased participation of SMEs in the marketplace in the resilient recovery phase (DL#12) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased efficiency of procurement function and value for money from procurement (DL#6) 	
Strengthen Debt Sustainability	States debt management weak. States debt doubled 2014-2016 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> State FRIs omits key provisions No debt sustainability analyses Domestic arrears accumulated Debt to revenue ratio tripled 2014-2016 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State public debt legislation approved amended; Timely and accurate state debt reporting to DMO; State debt sustainability analyses conducted (DL#7) Established system of domestic arrears counterparty verification (DL#8) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthened public debt management and fiscal responsibility framework (DL#7) Improved clearance/reduction of stock of domestic expenditure arrears (DL#8) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved debt sustainability (DL#9) Established a fiscally sustainable response to COVID-19 (DL#13) 	



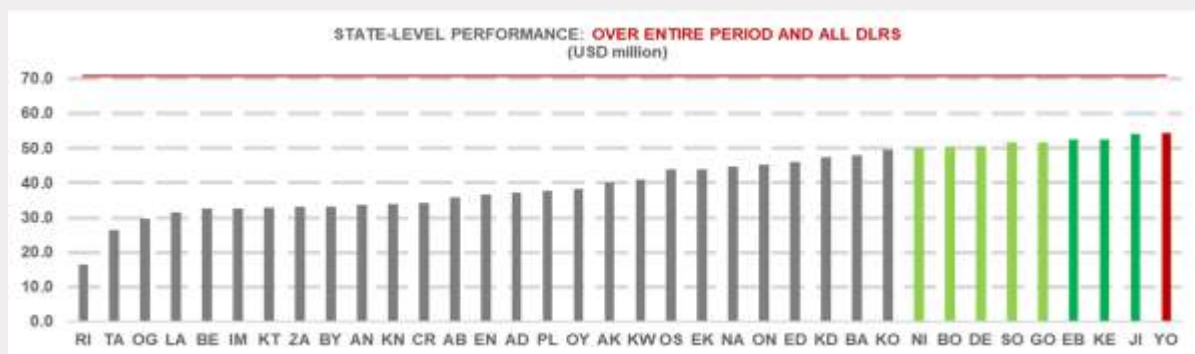
The US\$1.5 billion financing of the program was spread to cover US\$1.45 billion in annual performance grants and US\$50 million in technical assistance (TA) support to States. The TA component is delivered by implementing agencies – Public Service Institute of Nigeria (PSIN), Debt Management Office (DMO), Open Government Partnership (OGP) and an Implementing Partner which is the Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF). The NGF delivers a comprehensive set of capacity building activities to States on the Eligibility Criteria (EC) and Disbursement Linked Indicators (DLIs) 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, 12 and 13 to support them to achieve associated reform results. NGF's TA support includes technical advisory, desk reviews, technical workshops, facilitation of exchange visits, peer learning sessions, sensitization sessions, development, and dissemination of self-help reform toolkits (Guidelines/guidance notes and templates) amongst other interventions. The NGF delivered a total of 1,359 Just-in-Time (JIT) technical support to all the 36 States and the FCT across the various DLIs between January 2020 and December 2023.

For the annual performance grants component, States were assessed on the level of their achievement of the Eligibility Criteria and Disbursement Linked Results (DLRs) by the Independent Verification Agent (IVA) - the Office of the Auditor General of the Federation (OAuGF) alongside a third-party external audit firm for each of the four years. The amount accessible by States each year under the PforR is dependent on the States' ability to meet the annual eligibility criteria and all or part of the thirteen (13) Disbursement Linked Results (DLRs) across four Key Result Areas (KRA) namely: Increase fiscal transparency and accountability; Strengthen domestic revenue mobilization; Increase efficiency in public expenditure; and Strengthen debt management.

STATE-LEVEL PERFORMANCES UNDER SFTAS

	EXCELLENT PERFORMERS: TOP 10% OF STATES	EXCELLENT PERFORMERS: TOP 10% OF STATES
	TOP PERFORMER YOBE	JIGAWA KEBBI EBONYI

OVERALL PERFORMANCE: OVER ENTIRE PERIOD AND ALL DLRS



Some of the result outcomes over the four performance years include:



Increased Transparency (EC, DLI 1 – 2) Citizens can now access and assess State government budgets as well as final statements (including quarterly budget performance reports and annual audited financial statements) in line with global & national reporting standards such as the National Chart of Accounts (NCoA) and International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS). Government also makes citizens' versions of the budget and financial statement available online (citizens Budget and Accountability Report). 36 States published their annual budgets and AFS according to the NCoA and IPSAS between 2021 and 2023 while 31 States published their 2018 and 2019 and 33 and 28 States published their 2020 and 2021 audited financial statements for local governments respectively.



The Adoption of NCOA in 2021 - 2024 enables Data Aggregation and Comparison The aggregation of data that has come by way of SFTAS DLRs has availed everyone the much-needed data for national development expenditure planning. If sustained, deliberate and targeted expenditures can be planned for consensus interventions as was done for COVID-19 response. The NGF has supported States to adopt the administrative, economic, fund, function, location, and programme segments (although States adoption are at varying degrees) as well as deployed a public finance database - <https://publicfinance.ngf.org.ng/> to support easy access to subnational fiscal data, aid analysis and development planning.



Representative Budget (DLI 2): Increased citizens engagement during budget formulation and reflection of citizens input in final appropriation.



Follow the Money (DLI 6.2): 32 States passed public procurement laws in line with the UNCITRAL Model Law to standardise procurement processes and operations along global best practice. Similarly, 26 States transitioned to e-procurement, automating their entire procurement cycle to ensure greater transparency, competition, cost-efficiency, and value for money.



Responsive and Transparent Tax Administration System 29 States passed Consolidated State Revenue Codes to increase the transparency and harmonization of taxes, levies and fees paid to state and local governments. The passage of Consolidated Revenue Codes across States establishes a foundation for the harmonization of taxes, levies and fees paid to government. This has built transparency and will ease periodic reviews to align with current realities of the economy. Other reforms like prohibiting contracted-out collection of Personal Income Tax (PIT) reduces the opportunities for double and illegal taxation by persons who are not the State revenue authority. Overall, these reduce the cost of compliance; encourages improved tax compliance and consequently, raises government revenue.



Transparency on Debt Stock (including domestic expenditure arrears) (DLI 7 - 9): Greater transparency around what the true debt position of State governments are. This has impact on liquidity and solvency positions of government accounts. However, what is more important is the increased response of State governments to develop and execute an Arrears Clearance Framework (ACF). Keeping the debt stock within limits has an impact on a State's Credit and consequently, access to credit e.g., capital market, etc.



Independence of the Offices of the Auditor General for State and Local Government (DLI 10.3): 30 States passed audit laws to strengthen operational and financial autonomy for their Offices of Auditors-General for State and Local Government so that they can effectively execute their mandate. The NGF also supported 29 Offices of State and Local Government Auditors-General to conduct an institutional diagnostic assessment which provides each audit office with a road map for reforms.



Improving Land Administration (DLI 11.3): Increased deployment of Geographic Information System (GIS) to strengthen land administration and property enumeration. This will positively impact social development planning and create opportunities for effective property tax administration, which will improve government revenues for development expenditure.



Climate Action and Fiscal Response: 24 States integrated climate change expenditure tagging in their 2022 budget using the National Climate Change Policy (NCCP) classification.



Capacity Building and Self-Help Reform Toolkits: 8,940 Government officials at various levels (Legislators, Commissioners, Permanent Secretaries, directors, deputy/assistant directors, operational officers, etc.) across the 36 States benefitted/attended NGF's capacity building activities. Similarly, 10,121 downloads of SFTAS reform toolkits on NGF Website have been recorded between January 2020 and December 2023.



NGF E-Learning Management System (e-LMS): This was launched 15th November 2023, as part of the NGF Secretariat's efforts to expand the reach and suite of technical assistance platforms designed to support capacity building at the sub-national level. The e-LMS (<https://elms.ngf.org.ng/>) offers self-paced courses covering key reform areas, localized knowledge content, case studies, and dynamic media to ensure a world-class user experience.



Transparency Checklist and Deadlines

FISCAL DATA	PUBLICATION DEADLINE
NCOA compliant Annual Budget	By January 31
IPSAS compliant Audited Financial Statements	By July 31
Quarterly Budget Implementation Reports	Within 4 weeks of quarter end
Citizens Budget	By April 30
Citizen Accountability Report	By September 30
Procurement data in OCDS format	On monthly basis
Domestic Arrears Clearance Framework	By June 30
Domestic Expenditure Arrears Database	By December 31
Annual Debt Sustainability Report	By December 31
Medium Term Debt Management Strategy	By December 31

2.0 State Action on Business Enabling Reforms

Since July 2016, the Presidential Enabling Business Environment Council (PEBEC) has driven reforms to eliminate constraints in the business environment for micro, small, and medium sized enterprises (MSMEs) with varying degree of success.

In July 2017, the National Economic Council (NEC) unanimously approved the replication of PEBEC's intervention structure at the subnational level implemented through the PEBEC-NEC Technical Working Group. This mandate was later articulated in the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) 2017-2020 and subsequently retained in the National Development Plan (NDP) 2021- 2025 aimed at generating 21 million full-time jobs and lifting 35 million people out of poverty by 2025.

Building on the successes and lessons from SFTAS the Federal Ministry of Finance in collaboration with PEBEC and the Nigeria Governors' Forum with support from the World Bank, developed the State Action on Business Enabling Reforms (SABER) - a new Program for Result focused on various business enabling reforms including: (1) improving the efficiency of land administration, (2) Improving the regulatory framework for private investment in fiber optic infrastructure, (3) improving services provided by investment promotion agencies and public-private partnership units, and (4) Improving the efficiency and transparency of government-to-business services in participating states.

SABER THEORY OF CHANGE

Result Areas	Baseline State Business Enabling Environment challenges	Interventions Inputs and Outputs	Intermediate Outcomes	Outcomes	SABER PDO
Improved land administration and land-based investment process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ambiguous, non-transparent, and costly land administration at the State level Uncertainty around ownership and lack of land-based investment processes based on sound economic and social principles increase the risk of conflict and deter investment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> States publish key information on land-related procedures, fees, and service standards (DLI 1.1.1) Land records digitized and indexed following international good standards (DLI 1.1.2, 1.1.3 and 1.1.4) FRILIA framework adopted (DLI 1.2.1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More transparency in land administration Better quality and more transparent data on land ownership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More States with at least one pilot investment materialized under FRILIA (DLI 1.2.2) resulting in private investment that better meets economic and social objectives, with reduced risk of conflict More States digitize and index new C of Os in accordance with international good standard (DLI 1.1.4) 	Improved: (1) efficiency of land administration
Improved regulatory framework for private investment in fiber optic infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excessive ROW fees and opaque processes for obtaining ROW for broadband deployment hinder fiber deployment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> States implement new ROW fees for fiber deployment via standardized and transparent processes (DLI 2.1) States publish approved ROW-related requests by operators (DLI 2.2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower costs for fiber deployment Lower uncertainty for operators seeking to deploy fiber Increased transparency of approved ROW-related requests by operators (DLI 2.2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fiber optic cable for broadband deployed on new routes (DLI 2.3) 	(2) regulatory framework for private investment in fiber optic infrastructure
Improved services provided by investment promotion agencies (IPAs) and public-private partnership (PPP) units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unclear PPP institutional arrangements Lack of government support to bring projects to market State investment incentives unclear and opaque States lack effective investment promotion agencies (IPAs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> States establish PPP coordination unit/agency and pipeline of projects (DLI 3.1) States establish a PPP regulatory and institutional framework (DLI 3.2) State Project Facilitation Fund established and funded (DLI 3.3) State Investment Promotion Agencies (IPA) established and/or strengthened (DLI 4.2) Incentives (state and federal) and eligibility criteria detailed and disclosed (DLI 4.1) Number of entities receiving state investment incentives published (DLI 4.2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> States' PPP candidate projects better identified and prepared in a transparent and sustainable manner States' PPP risk-management (fiscal commitments + contingent liabilities) strengthened (DLI 3.2) Potential and existing investors receive better support from IPAs More transparency on investment incentives (DLI 4.4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More states that establish a PPP coordinating unit mandated to facilitate PPPs, that has publicly disclosed its PPP pipeline projects on a portal (DLI 3.1) More states that establish/strengthen an IPA that performs the key functions of Marketing, Information, Assistance and Advocacy (DLI 4.3) State IPAs attract and facilitate greater (announced) investments (DLI 4.1) 	(3) services provided by investment promotion agencies and public-private partnership units and
Improved efficiency and transparency of government-to-business services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> States MDAs do not deliver public services to businesses in an efficient and transparent way Traders crossing states are confronted with multiple checkpoints and non-transparent trade-related fees and levies, driving up the costs of transportation and delaying goods to the market Absence of system for traders to complain and receive redress from the state Most State Committees on Export Promotion (SCEP) are not operational A complex and inefficient tax compliance process imposes high cost of compliance on MSMEs Commercial dispute resolution for small claims remains costly, lengthy and unpredictable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fees, procedures and service-delivery timelines of business-enabling MDAs accessible to the public and GRM operational (DLI 5.3) States establish GRM for traders (DLI 6.1.2) States reactivate and strengthen Committee on Export Promotion (DLI 6.2.1) States adopt presumptive turnover tax for MSMEs and consolidated state and LG tax/levies/fees collection via e-platform (DLI 7.1) States establish special court for small claims (DLI 8.1) States install and publish practice directions that facilitates access to justice and strengthen efficient court practices for small claims and encourage alternative-dispute resolution (ADR) (DLI 8.1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Businesses have access to more transparent and predictable public services from the State Elimination of haulage fees/levies (DLI 6.1.4) Eligible MSMEs can pay transparent presumptive turnover tax and can file and pay all business-related State and LG taxes and contributions online (DLI 7) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower compliance costs, more transparency and better regulatory quality for businesses More predictable and cheaper inter-state trade (DLI 6.1.4) Increased number of trader complaint/grievance resolved (DLI 6.1.4) Increased number of firms that obtain exporter certification (DLI 6.2.3) Increased number of firms pay their state and local taxes, fees and levies online (DLI 7.2) Commercial cases for small claims are resolved quicker (DLI 8.3) 	(4) efficiency and transparency of government-to-business services in participating states

Program Disbursement Linked Indicators (DLIs) & Anchor States MDAs

Results Area 1: Improved Land Administration and Land-based Investment Process

- DLI 1: Improved efficiency in property registration and sustainability of the land-based investment

Results Area 2: Improved regulatory framework for private investment in fiber optic infrastructure

- DLI 2: Improved regulatory framework for private investment in fiber optic infrastructure.

Results Area 3: Improved services provided by investment promotion agencies (IPAs) and public-private partnership (PPP) units.

- DLI 3: Development of an effective PPP framework
- DLI 4: Improved investment promotion environment

Results Area 4: Improved efficiency and transparency of government-to-business services.

- DLI 5: Increased transparency of official fees and procedures
- DLI 6: Increased transparency of fees and levies for inter-state trade and increased exporter certification.
- DLI 7: Simplified state and local business tax regimes
- DLI 8: Quick determination of commercial disputes

Key State MDAs for Expenditure Framework

Ministries of Finance, Budget and Economic Planning, State Internal Revenue Service (DLI 3*) (DLI 4) (DLI 7*)
Governor's offices, Investment Promotion Agency or Public Private Partnership Agency or Equivalent (DLI 2*) (DLI 3*) (DLI 5*)
Ministries of Trade and Investment / Commerce and Industry, or equivalent (DLI 4*) (DLI 6*)
Ministries of Land and Urban Planning, Telecommunication Infrastructure Regulatory Agency or equivalent (DLI 1*) (DLI 2)
Investment Promotion Offices/Agencies (DLI 2) (DLI 4) (DLI 3*) (DLI 4) (DLI 6)
Judiciary (DLI 8*)

The program is valued at US\$750 million covering a prior result year (1st June 2022 – 5th January 2023) and Three years (January 2023 – December 2025). Like SFTAS, the program has two components namely (1) US\$730 million Program-for-Results (PforR) Component and (2) US\$20 million Technical Assistance (TA) Investment Project Financing (IPF) component. Unlike SFTAS though, the US\$730 million in PforR will be disbursed to States as loans based on annual performance verified by an Independent Verification Agent (IVA).

The Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF) is supporting States on the program eligibility criteria related to annual budget and AFS in line with NCoA and IPSAS likewise Disbursement Linked Indicators (DLIs) 1, 2,3 and 7. NGF's TA support includes sensitization sessions, technical workshops, peer learning sessions, technical advisory, desk reviews, exchange visits, e-course deployment, development, and dissemination of self-help reform toolkits.

In 2022, the NGF delivered Just-in-Time (JIT) technical support to 30 States on Prior Result for DLI 1 and 19 States in 2023 across DLIs 1, 2,3 and 7.

In 2024, the NGF in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Finance and other implementing agencies will conduct a series of learning sessions looking retrospectively at the prior result performance and technical assistance delivery in 2022 and 2023 respectively. The NGF will also be holding a number of learning/technical workshops on strengthening Public Private Partnership regulatory framework and domesticating the Framework for Responsible and Inclusive Land-Intensive Agricultural Investments (FRILIA). These and other reforms supported by the Forum will be complimented with technical advisory, development, and dissemination of self-help toolkits.

HEALTH SECTOR RENEWAL COMPACT

TO IMPROVE POPULATION HEALTH OUTCOMES AT SCALE USING A SECTOR-WIDE APPROACH

We, the undersigned, met in Abuja this 12th day of December 2023 on the World's Universal Health Coverage Day under the theme "Health for All: Time for Action".

1) **RECOGNIZING** that health is the key to human capital accumulation; and a healthy, economically productive population, growing at a sustainable pace, supported by a health system that caters for all, is essential to Nigeria's socioeconomic development.

2) **RECOGNIZING** that the key challenges to achieving our national health objectives include constrained governance systems and structures with limited accountability, inadequate, inefficient, and inequitable health care financing, shortage, and mal distribution of human resources for health, limited availability of quality health commodities, insufficient citizens' and community engagement, and hyper fragmented, poorly coordinated external development assistance.

3) **RECOGNIZING** that the National Health Act (2014) created a National Health System comprising the Federal Ministry of Health, Ministries of Health in the 36 States and Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Local Governments, private sector, and community actors, and that the Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare is mandated to pursue reforms of the National Health System.

4) **ACKNOWLEDGING** the approval of His Excellency, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR, for the implementation of Nigeria's Health Sector Renewal Initiative using a Sector-Wide Approach to improve population health outcomes.

5) **APPRECIATING** the consultations with Nigeria Governors' Forum, National

Economic Council, and approval of the Sector-Wide approach by the 64th National Council on Health recently held in Ekiti with participation of the Federal Government and all 36 States and FCT.

Hereby agree to pursue improvement in health outcomes by,

6) **ALIGNING** our objectives with the priorities in the Nigerian National Strategic Health Development Plan (NSHDP) and the Renewed Hope Health Sector Blueprint's pillars (Effective Governance, Efficient, Equitable and Quality Health System, Unlocking Value Chains and Health Security) to improve governance, accountability, and relentless focus on results.

7) **ADOPTING** a more coordinated approach between Federal Government, State Governments, FCT, and all Development Partners, to achieving the desired improvement in the health of all Nigerians at scale.

8) **COMMITTING** to the redesign of the Basic Health Care Provision Fund, comprising at least 1% of the Consolidated Revenue Fund, provided by the National Health Act (2014), as the foundational basis of the sector-wide approach, to:

a. Ensure more equitable, allocation of resources to the poorest and most disadvantaged persons and populations.

b. Mobilize additional development partner (multilateral, bilateral, philanthropic, and private sector) financial resources to a common pool or aligned in parallel with the sector-wide approach.

c. Doubling the number of fully functional Primary Healthcare Centers

(PHCs) receiving Decentralized Facility Financing for infrastructural upgrades, and operational costs to ensure delivery of high quality essential Primary Health Care package including routine immunization, delivery, Antenatal Care(ANC), Postnatal Care, Family and meet the Basic Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Services (BEmONC) criteria, from 8,809 to 17,618 PHCs by 2027 in 36 States and the FCT.

d. Link PHCs to a Secondary Care facility providing Comprehensive Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care (CEmONC).

e. Link PHCs to referral CEmONC Facilities through progressive development of a National Emergency and Medical Ambulance System.

f. Refine the Vulnerable Group Fund (VGF) and optimize risk pools to strategically purchase highest impact benefit package to improve health outcomes with a focus on financial protection for critical reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, adolescent health, and nutrition services to reduce morbidity and preventable deaths.

g. Take collective action towards achieving Universal Health Coverage by expanding health insurance coverage, ensuring healthy and viable risk pools through effective governance, and establishing an enabling environment for better public and private sector collaboration.

h. Complement BHCPEF financing with public health interventions to reduce the burden of Communicable and Non-Communicable Diseases including malaria, tuberculosis, and HIV/AIDS, and to strengthen systems and improve health security.

i. Ensure “best-buy” investments in community health models to serve as a critical entry point to public health services in a people-centered health system, including as a first step retraining of up to 120,000 frontline health workers as collaborative effort between Federal, State Governments, and key development partners to be followed by enhanced deployment.

j. Make transparent to all Government, Non-Governmental Partners, CSOs, and Citizens, the resources allocated, released, and results achieved.

9) **COMMITTING** all State Governments and FCT to complement the Federal Government by undertaking the following key policy actions:

a. Increasing budget allocation and timely releases of funds for primary health

care services, immunization, and public health, and make those allocations and releases public.

b. Verifiably fulfilling jointly agreed counterpart obligations, in cash or in-kind, in support of the BHCPEF, to State Primary Health Care Development Agencies and State Health Insurance Authorities and streamlining processes for disbursement and accounting for such transfers.

c. Collaborate in exploring innovative financing options, to expand universal health coverage especially for poorest Nigerians, potentially including health taxes, surcharges, and first charge from the VAT pool.

d. Training and retaining qualified health workforce dedicated to service delivery at community levels, primary health centers and hospitals.

e. Ensuring presentation and consideration of routine data on health outputs and intermediate outcomes on a quarterly basis in State executive councils, Nigeria Governors' Forum, and relevant National Economic Council meetings.

f. Participating in community health campaigns and engaging traditional and religious leaders in the States.

10) **COMMITTING** to the establishment of a joint coordination and monitoring mechanism in the Sector-Wide approach, establishing a common database of all health development partner engagements with the Federal Government and all 36 States and FCT, a results scorecard to transparently chart progress on a regular basis (at least annual, semi-annual) and hold each other accountable in bi-directional ways, to achieve desired results or course-correct.

11) **ENDORISING** the preparation and presentation of an annual report of the State of Health of Nigerians and the National Health System, as provided in the National Health Act, to the President, National Assembly, Federal Executive Council, and the National Economic Council, and the hosting of a National annual joint review of performance along the benchmarks set out in the sector-wide indicators framework; and

12) **CALLING** on all health development partners to fully support the sector-wide approach; develop its coordinating secretariat; align behind Government's priorities supporting national ownership; strengthen and use national institutions and systems where possible; and reorient all technical and financial assistance, in a nationally coordinated manner, to the front ends of service delivery rather than process and activity orientation.

Inauguration of the Nutrition Core Working Committee (NCWC) by His Excellency, the Vice President Senator Kashim Shetima



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1 Director Nutrition, Federal Ministry of Health; Mrs Ladidi K Bako-Aiyegbusi

2 President, Nutrition Society of Nigeria; Prof Wasiu Afolabi

3 Board member, Nutrition International; Dr Bamidele Davies Omotola and Ministry of Budget and National Planning representative, Mrs Nelson Nduka Chito

4 SSA Public Health, office of the Vice President; Mrs Uju Anastasia Anwukah

5 World Bank Nutrition Specialist; Dr Ritgak Tilley Gyado

6 Senior Health Advisor, NGF; Dr Ahmad Abdulwahab

7 Members of the Nutrition Core Working Committee (NCWC) in a parley with His Excellency, the Vice President Senator Kashim Shetima

8 Members of the Nutrition Core Working Committee (NCWC) in a group photograph with His Excellency, the Vice President Senator Kashim Shetima

HEALTHCARE REVOLUTION:

Nigeria Must Embrace Herbal Plants

– PHARM. ZAINAB SHARIFF

Pharmacist Zainab Shariff is clearly a scientist more at home with proactive analyses and focussed action. Not surprisingly, in over three decades of her high-intensity interventions, she has demonstrated that pharmacy, public service and now integrative medicine address human development.

Leaning forward, Pharm. Zainab Ujudud Shariff quickly provides a succinct overview of her strategic niche in the nation's healthcare big picture. Her words: "Now, the World Health Organisation (WHO) recognizes three healthcare systems. It has accepted the orthodox - which we call allopathic medicine. They don't have any issues with that; they all have traditional standards. They also agree with traditional medicine because it is indigenous medicine. It is part of your culture. There is no culture that does not have its own systems of healing.

"WHO has also approved of what we call complementary and alternative medicine. If it is not orthodox or traditional medicine, then it is a scam. For any health intervention that is neither orthodox nor traditional, we group them as scams. The new intake is a combination of the three that we look at holistically which is called Integrative Medicine.

"For us in Nigeria, if we want to copy the Indians or the Chinese because of their population, we must see how their healthcare systems function. They combine all three. But in Nigeria, we are yet to do that. There is poor recognition of the TCAM system but at the ministry, we are doing our best.

"We have developed policies and guidelines. We work with practitioners and all relevant stakeholders to be able to see how we can integrate into our healthcare, especially at the Primary Healthcare level. Eighty percent of our people access traditional medicine as their basic healthcare. That is community medicine.

"What we need to do now is to know how we can officially integrate the systems. Things are moving slowly but we do hope that there is a strong political will. The issue is that we are too orthodox-inclined and we are too westernized. We believe that our own is not good.

"Some of these old practitioners are dying with their reservoir of knowledge. If you have them, you need to take the knowledge and collaborate. That would go along a better way to harness the health, social and economic benefits."

Shariff further explains that Integrative Medicine, recognized by WHO, is a combination of orthodox, traditional complementary and alternative medicines and some countries are already doing this - such as Germany, India, Japan, and USA. But what progress has been made in Integrative Medicine in Nigeria? Her response mirrored some lack of enthusiasm.

"There has not been much progress made in Nigeria. We need to do better, and we can do better if we there is a strong political will and determination. For now, we are advocating integrative medicine for hospitals of Traditional Complementary and Alternative Medicine (TCAM). TCAM Department is new. We started in just 2018. It used to be a division. I am the pioneer and incidentally, pioneer Director.

"We are looking at collaboration with the technical experts, for instance, from China. We want China to come and set up a Nigerian (TCAM) hospital. The same principle goes with the Indians. That way, we have these systems that are officially



accepted and can be officially accessed by the populace. Addressing these challenges would improve health indices and would go a long way in preventing health challenges because the TCAM focuses more on prevention.”

She also clarifies the TCAM Department of the Federal Ministry of Health that is driving the novel medical niche adding that “You have come to a relevant department that is doing that.”

Clearly, the evolution or inception new policies of such scale certainly would need inputs of the national parliament to make it effective. Sharrif agrees and explains that with regards to the policies relevant to TCAM and integrative medicine, legislation remains a challenge.

According to her, “The legislation is where we have a bit of a challenge. The Bill is at the National Assembly waiting for enactment into law. We hope that it can be done before the end of this year so that we can have a council that can regulate. We would also have an institute where our people can be purely trained in this aspect. We continue to look at a prototype of China and India which are already more experienced in this field.”

On the issue of sustainability, the pharmacist explains that “the advantage of these practices would bring in mind some social and economic benefits. You can't discuss traditional medicine without thinking about the products. The main product is medicinal plants and Nigeria is blessed with over 10,000 species of medicinal plant products. Yet, we have not utilized even twenty percent. Yet, we have arable land and these medicinal plants are all available in all the zones of this country.

Looking at the role of subnationals in domesticating integrative medicine and exploiting the huge herbal plants' potential, she is emphatic that state governors have a critical role to play. Her words: “I wish that each state governor would know the value of its medicinal plants. If you know the value of the medicinal plants, then you know the value addition it will generate which translates to whole lot of revenue. Apart from the health benefits, there would be social and economic benefits. If we know the importance of medicinal plants, we will vastly cultivate them and when you cultivate them, are you not creating jobs?”

“Medicinal plants have health benefits and environmental benefits. You are looking at issues of climate change. Then, there are also the benefits of value addition in processing medicinal plants. All these imported products are bought at a high cost. We have refused to believe in what we have. We have refused to harness, and we have refused to listen to the people that are experts in this field. We have refused to support research as much as we can.

“I am looking at a very lucrative area and these plants are found in states. The state governors should look inwards. They should look at what they have. For example, I wish the Sokoto State governor, knew the value of garlic and onions he has. If he sets up a processing farm for garlic, you would be surprised. If you do not harness what you have in front of you, that is God-given treasures - then you can never move forward. You can't rely on only what is being brought from outside.

“State governors have the advantage, and they can massively cultivate these medicinal plants and process them. All they need to do is contact the relevant agency such as the Ministry of Health and the (TCAM) department.

“They can collaborate with NAFDAC, NIPRID and then, of course, private partners. The Chinese and Indian are coming to seek collaboration and set up herbal industries. We advocate for national standards first before international standards. What can Nigeria eat? Let our own people do our own standards. I would say West African standards first. We can't keep emulating foreigners. Our health indices are not improving because we refuse to develop the local content that can help us. That is the truth.”

But beyond the obvious passion Shariff brings to her calling, are there specific data to substantiate her submission that there are over 10, 000 medicinal plants in Nigeria, traversing all the geo-agricultural zones? She again quickly demonstrates that scientists don't just talk to impress.

In her words: “We have documents that we worked on. We have a Pharmacopeia, Harvard Pharmacopeia. We have documents that guide you to see the plans that we have. We have already done Volume 1 and we are working on Volume 2 to add more medicinal plants.

“In scientific research, we work with universities that give us this data and we work with them as a committee. This is an area that I want the state governors to look at, especially at the Primary Healthcare Level. What we are looking at is training those health professional practitioners. Give them some basic training and code of conduct and ethics; put them at that Primary Healthcare Level with



close contact with other professional experts.

“If the practitioner does his own, he can now refer it to the orthodox doctor or health care professional that is trained. If we do that at the primary healthcare level, we would strengthen quality healthcare services.

“If you don't include traditional medicine or complementary medicine in our primary health care level which is (WHO-approved) and 80 per cent accessed, can we progress? We want to incorporate things in the right way.”

Swiveling to the specific challenges hobbling the progression of traditional and complementary medicine in the country, she explains that delay by the national parliament in passing the Bill that will give immense legislative traction to TCAM domestication is regrettable.

According to her, “For one, we need the Bill to be passed urgently. That is the Traditional and Complementary Medicine Bill. Since 2007, we have been fighting over the Bill and in 2019, the Federal Executive Council (FEC) approved the Bill. Now, it is up to the National Assembly. The National Assembly should enact it into law and once we have the law, we can now regulate and institutionalize it.”

She further notes that, “Just as we regulate the Pharmacist Council, Dental and Medical Council, Nursing Council, then you now have these practitioners regulated and they can deliver in line with the traditional medicine policy. That can deliver parallel services with quality healthcare respecting one another for the purpose of providing health and quality services to the public.

Cut to the bone, funding remains the make-or-buy determinant of even the most critical projects. Is the TCAM project different? Shariff responds in the negative and regrets that programs that have local content are not much funded in contrast to those that have foreign content.

“When you have approval, then the funding would come. For now, if you observe, programs that have local content are not much funded. Those that have international content are much more funded which is wrong,” she clarifies - noting that “We should re-think this. The governors should re-think.”

She gives managing malaria as an example of the primary healthcare level quandary. “An example would be when it comes to managing malaria, everything about the malaria drug is imported. We tried in 2008 to domesticate a plant and we succeeded but there was not enough political will and it went off.”

Recalling that in the thick of the Covid-19 affliction, Madagascar went and domesticated its own vaccine and we started buying COVID-19 from them, she notes that they sold and made profit.

But it is not all bad news at the home front. According to Shariff, “I am glad we are working with raw materials on this project. We have three pilot farms that are cultivating it: Kano, Abuja, and Niger. We are happy to see that the plant is growing, and the advantage of that plant is that it has multiple purposes.

“If you grow something in your land, you look at the multipurpose. The leaf is useful. The stalk is useful. The shaft of the plant is useful. This is based on scientific analysis. If you take the leaf to make your malaria medicine, the stalk and shaft can make mosquito coil which you can give to the rural people instead of the nets.

“But you know, these things have a lot of international barriers. But we should be able to move forward with the political will. Consider how did China do it? How did India do it? They also have their own local and international content growing side by side. If they were to import drugs for billions of people, where would they get the drugs? The Nigerian

population is growing and will we continue to rely on raw materials? We also need medicine security.”

Looking at the big picture, how can the Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF) play a role in what's unfolding? The pioneer TCAM Department Director was emphatic - “They must firm up their political will. The primary healthcare system is at their level. They should focus. They should sit down and see how they can integrate those practitioners with standards in their primary healthcare level and put them on a referral system.

“For example, I would say that we get community expert practitioners at primary healthcare centres. There are guidelines for the practice. When the Bill is passed first and then what is needed is to implement the bill at the LGA level. They can fill some of the spaces at the primary healthcare level. They can deliver their own quality health services at the state.

“The states have multiple advantages because we are talking about diversification. We are talking about agriculture. These medicinal plants should



The National Assembly should enact it into law and once we have the law, we can now regulate and institutionalize it

be cultivated. I'm not just an ordinary Pharmacist; I'm a Pharmacist with a difference. I have the passion and I developed it. I've authored up to nine books. All of them are focused on this one area. Honestly, we must promote local content, such as medicinal plants. They matter.

“The state governors stand to benefit from this. All that needs to be done is just that we need to make a presentation to them. Then, they go back to their states and set up their own committee and see what they can sacrifice.”

What is Shariff's source of passion which has transformed her into a pathfinder? In her words: “When you look at yourself and you decide why you are in this field, you notice that God has anointed some people to do some special assignments. It is a calling over

the years. Read me up from 1996 to-date. I have been very focused on this calling, and I recognise that it is God's calling for me, coupled with the inheritance.

“You see me. I dream of medicinal plants. I see medicinal plants and I make medicinal plants. I accept it as a message that God has called me to do and He decided to make me a pharmacist first so that when I speak, they know that I am speaking with my knowledge.”

What message does Shariff have for the National Assembly, the national leadership and sub-nationals?

Hear her: “At the national level, we are doing all right. But my message to the people is that we can do better. We need to support the departments aggressively and we need to pursue local content in a defined way. Once we say local content, we should look at local content and work hard to develop it.

“We need to have an enabling environment that is attractive. We could also have pilots and at the sub-national level which is your entity (NGF's), we need to have a special presentation so they see the value of what they have. No state is poor. There is no state that is poor in this country. They need to sit down and look at what God has given them first and harness them, it matters.”

THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY IN

2023

January



February



March



April/May



June



July



August



September



October/November



December

