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EXTENDED FRONTIERS

NGF MEETS DANGOTE, BMGF IN SEATTLE



THE 21ST CENTURY FIRST LADY



IN THE PURSUIT OF HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

CWG TOURS KADUNA, EKITI AND AKWA IBOM STATES



Kaduna State officials, the CWG, NGF and other partners in a group photograph

As part of efforts to improve human capital development which involves processes that relate to training, education and other interventions to increase the level of knowledge, skills, abilities, values, and social assets to improve performance to affect people's lives, economic and social development in many ways, the Nigeria Governors Forum (NGF) and its development partners, key among who is the Core Working Group (CWG) of the nation's Human Capital Development (HCD) plan, an initiative of the National Economic Council (NEC), recently re-energize the Nigerian people and particularly governments' functionaries and key stakeholders at the subnational level, to step up efforts to invest in capacity building and human development.

The Nigeria Governors' Forum on its pilot national HCD evaluation led the CWG's on advocacy to Kaduna state to solicit the cooperation of stakeholders in the state as well as the people of the state to align their vision with that of the government at all levels. To achieve this the team organised a direct engagement with all stakeholders in Kaduna state. They engaged local CSOs, traditional and religious rulers and heads of households.

The two-day working visit which was led by the Director-General of the NGF, Mr. Asishana B Okauru, the Head, HCD CWG Yosola Akanbi jointly feature interactive sessions beginning with the Governor's session which seeks to set the tone for HCD CWG's engagement of the key actors at the subnational level in the state.

The discussions revolve around expectations from the states which was clarified as well as the Governor's HCD priorities. The idea was to prioritise the HCD efforts nationwide and to deepen the engagement of key Stakeholders towards domesticating HCD.

Abdulrazaque Bello Barkindo, Head, Media and Public Affairs, NGF, had earlier said that "The HCD Council Members Session is expected to be a fully interactive session where the Governor elaborates on the State's HCD vision, key priorities and targets. The State's baseline HCD information is expected to be presented and deliberated upon by participants. Key successes achieved in HCD interventions will be dissected and elaborated upon and challenges faced in improving the HCD baseline will also be addressed.

"The peculiarities of each state regarding interventions relevant to the state will be discussed including the key expectations regarding the development of the State's Action Plans and the establishment of the State's HCD Monitoring & Evaluation Team."

It was gathered from the state that HCD demographics show a significant

amount of potential that remains untapped at the subnational level as human capital basically encompasses the stock of habits, knowledge, social and personality attributes embodied in the ability to perform labour, so as to produce economic value. HCD is also unique and differs from any other capital. It is needed for companies to achieve goals, develop and remain innovative. Companies and states can invest in human capital through education and creating enabling improved levels of quality and production.

The human capital theory is closely associated with the study and management of human resources. It is a development component that has been relegated by governments' functionaries and stakeholders alike, in Nigeria. To get a real feel of how human capital development is being handled around the country, the CWG visited some states to exchange ideas and experience. Its three thematic areas are health and nutrition, education and the workforce.

In a meeting with Governor Nasiru el-Rufai, the governor presented a glimpse of how investing in HCD was taking his state to out of doldrums.

El Rufai explained that the States Bureau for Statistics has saved the state more than N160m in ghost-feeding money. "It is dangerous for any state," he said.

The Governor reiterated the need to allow agencies saddled with the responsibility of allocating resources to be allowed to handle data concerning the same organisation which it superintends.

He explained that he relies on knowledge management modules to drive the state.

His five Policy Councils are a perfect example. Apart from injecting expertise in the system, the Policy Councils have also diminished the influence of politics and politicians in running the state's affairs.

Although some people have argued that Kaduna state is more of an education environment than innovation and relaxation because of its numerous institutions of learning, but the fact is Kaduna state provides an Innovation Hub where young unemployed people who are jobless get engaged to make their lives more meaningful.

The pristine subjects that easily attract the nation's younger population to the state. Kaduna provides something out of the ordinary, like fun theme spaces.

The CWG includes partners and consultants from the World Bank, the McKinsey Group and BMGF among others.



...THE PURSUIT OF HCD

CWG in Ekiti

The visit to Ekiti was not exactly a walk in the park. Governor Kayode Fayemi is a known development agent having been a founder of CDD but the HCD focal person Mr Ogunjobi provided little or no support to the famed development credentials of the governor. He had other qualities though.

The Ekiti state visit was more elaborate in terms of the stakeholder meetings. The Chairman of the traditional council in the state and Chief of ...received the CWG and had in his palace on the day representatives of the various political interests that drive the administration of his domain. The Local Government Chairmanship aspirant of the APC was also on hand to contribute to the deliberations and he promised to take full ownership of the project.

There were other traditional council chieftains as well. At the meeting, there were suggestions that in order for the HCD program realize its full potential, the traditional institution, who for all intents and purposes are the custodian of values need to be given a constitutional role to play. There was no harm in collating the contributions and suggestions even though the work of the CWG is to sensitize the populace on their responsibilities in society and share the vision of the government, not just as a party manifesto for the ruling party at the center but as a response to the poor rating of Nigeria among the committee of nations as far as HCD is concerned.

The lessons of Ekiti State are distinct. The youth feel alienated from the scheme of things especially the implementation of the budget, even though they were given the opportunity to contribute to the drafting of the budget. There are however incentives to different groups which had been in place since the first tenure of Governor Kayode Fayemi. These include rural allowances for teachers and other categories of workers, Yesso, and the Owo Arugbo which all helped to ameliorate the sufferings of the most vulnerable in society.

CWG in Akwa Ibom

In Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, the CWG was confronted with the peculiarities that defy collective solutions. It was after the Coordinator of the CWG Ms Yosola Akinbi had addressed the crowd of stakeholders and advocated some of the palliatives that could improve HCD in the state.

Soon enough an area of cultural disparity between the state and the rest of the country was highlighted by one of the group leaders who argued that for obvious reasons, that the boarding school, system and the school, feeding system was not welcome.

Further one of the speakers at the session, a medical practitioner, mentioned that for some reason, women would attend all the antenatal processes but prefer to have her child in the church or at home, aware of the professional glare of the hospices.

These and many other revelations were made at the stakeholders' meeting in

Uyo. The meetings which were summarily altered due to several engagements of top government functionaries, however, took place in a most convivial atmosphere with heads of various groups including the NLC, NMA, women groups, Women's wings of several groups, youth groups, student groups and the academic community in attendance.

Yosola Akinbi explained to the groups that this second phase of the CWG activities is designed to engage with state and critical stakeholders to sensitize them on the national vision that should drive Nigeria. She said that the global rating of HCD which places Nigeria 152 out of 157 is a national embarrassment. However, we are not in denial, she added, because "we accept our fate as it is and are ready to get up and work to fight back and ensure that our rating improves."

Ms Akinbi stated that the HCD work is the initiative of all the 36 governors under the chairmanship of the Vice President, Prof Yemi Osibanjo and the National Economic Council. The NEC is a meeting of the 36 Governors and the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria with the Vice President chairing.

At a meeting with the Deputy Governor who apologized profusely for the absence of the Governor, Udom Emmanuel, the Secretary to the State Government expressed delight that the HCD program is not a party program designed to force states to implement rather it is a holistic panacea to drive Nigerians out of poverty. He directed government functionaries at the occasion to take ownership of the program because it is not an APC program and make it sink in the grassroots so that the nation and its people in entirety are the better.

The state, according to the focal person, and corroborated by several speakers in the meeting, has done well in the areas of immunization which has achieved 100 per cent and its HIV interventions are excellent. There are also free medical services for pregnant women, infants and the aged. While other states are struggling to get children in school, the Akwa Ibom State Government is battling with classroom congestion. How can we have out of school children when we offer free education? A permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education who attended the stakeholders meeting asked rhetorically.

Akwa Ibom officials echoed the same sentiments throughout the meetings, "we have the vision and we do not have a problem with targets and timelines. We only need support and funding" one of the officials summarized. However, like most of the states visited by the CWG, accurate data seems to stunt growth and planning. The state has in place the Child's Rights Act and it is an offence for anyone to keep a child out of school. Although women appeared adequately represented in the civil service cadre, there were still agitations for more chances for women in the state. One of the female speakers who was applauded by the crowd had spoken so eloquently about providing support like Creches within the proximity of the workplaces so women do not have to expose themselves while breastfeeding at workplaces.





First Lady of Ekiti State, Erelu Fayemi, Chair of NGWF visits NGF Secretariat to kick off her reign



Erelu received by Mr Okuru as she arrives the NGFS



In the office of the Head Media & Public Affairs, Barkindo



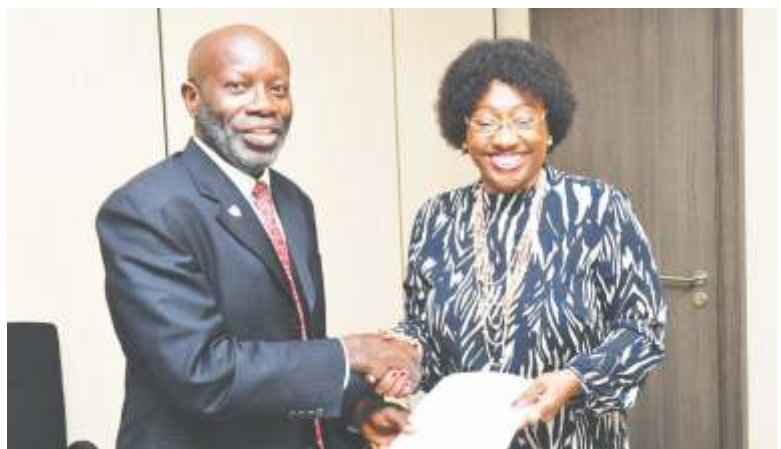
Erelu meets ED Strategy, LOT Shittu in the corridor of the NGFS



NGF's Senior Health Advisor, Dr. Ahmad Abdulwahab explains a point to Erelu at the NGFS



NGFS staff in a group photograph with the Chair of the NGNF after her maiden meeting of the NGFS



Okuru presents NGWF Chair, Erelu with a publication of the NGFS



THE 21ST CENTURY FIRST LADY

Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi

Recently, the Nigerian Governors' Forum (NGF) organised a one-day seminar for spouses of returning and incoming Governors, under the auspices of the Nigerian Governors Wives Forum. It is the first time the NGF would organize such an event, and all the participants and observers found it very useful. Even though it is painful to think of the fact that there is not at least one female Governor in Nigeria, I will not dwell on that today. I have always regarded being a First Lady as just another platform that enables me address my life-long commitment to promoting and protecting women's rights. It is a platform that has a very specific time-frame, with opportunities to influence change but it is also full of pitfalls. I have written about this topic before, so what I have here is a bit of cut and paste from previous speeches and articles on the subject.

The wives of political leaders in Nigeria (and elsewhere) are often treated with suspicion and disdain. This is mostly because the track record of some political spouses has left a lot to be desired and has turned people against the idea of them being visible. I however believe that a lot of vituperation against political spouses is less about their actual or potential misdeeds, but more about the perceived place of wives. Wives are supposed to stay at home, looking after the home front, firmly under the control of their husbands. We have had many debates about the roles of political spouses, the danger they present for democratic spaces through their back door manipulations, their use of informal authority for personal gain, their lust for illegal power, and the drain they pose on tax payers' resources. While most of these concerns might be valid, I would like to have a look at the other side of the story.

The political wife, over time, has become all things to all people. She is a mother to the family and community, prayer warrior, adviser, friend, negotiator, peace maker, hostess, ambassador, role model, advocate, pace-setter, philanthropist. To be able to ac-



complish all this she has to be an effective strategist, administrator, multi-tasker, networker and much more. There is no substitute for a politician's wife, no personal aide, 'Women Leader' or political appointee can take the place of a spouse.

However, with all these expectations also comes the understanding that political spouses will have character traits such as empathy, humility, courtesy, grace, diplomacy, discretion, tact, restraint and generosity. It is understood that



to whom much is given, much is expected, and so spouses are required to carry out their various assignments with all the dignity and grace they can muster at all times, and be above board in most things.

The life of a political spouse is not all about glamour, perks and endless ceremonies. The human cost of public service can be very high and some even have to make the ultimate sacrifice - either experiencing the death of a spouse on the job or being killed themselves - the late Alhaja Kudirat Abiola, the wife of the late Chief M.K.O. Abiola is an example. Spouses often go through serious hardships due to the nature of politics - long periods of absence, endless working hours, very limited family time, betrayals and treachery due to the insatiable nature of human beings, and abandonment when the tap of political patronage dries up.

A political leader does not need a constitutional provision to tell him whether his wife's role is important or not. He knows it, everyone around him knows it. When people need favours from a leader, they go to his wife. The same people who complain about a wife's overbearing influence over her husband will be the same to run to her for intervention when they have problems with their boss. It is the political wife who is left holding her husband's hand when fortunes change and everyone flies off like birds. She is the one who picks up the pieces when trusted friends and associates turn against them. And then her phones start ringing again when political fortunes change for the better.

We live in a society that has become rather schizophrenic in its understanding and analysis of local and global trends. On the one hand, we are quick to point out how exemplary democratic systems are in the West, but fail to take into account how those institutions evolved within the context of their own history and values. In the US for example, the Office of the First Lady of the United States (FLOTUS) evolved over time. It was not in the American Constitution, and for many years the office was not funded, except for use of seconded, temporary staff. All this changed in November 1978 when President Jimmy Carter approved Public Law 95-570 which provided for the First Lady's budget and staff. In addition, attitudes and expectations have shifted over the years to accommodate different spouses who bring their own unique contributions as long as they are within established parameters of service to the people and support for the vision of Mr. President.

On the other hand, here in Nigeria, we are unable to allow our institutions grow and learn. Our response is to throw the baby out with the bath water. We do not allow healthy and informed debate on the role of political spouses. We keep personalizing the issues by focusing on individual shortcomings

rather than taking a more holistic view of how partners do indeed add value to the political process. We hereby create a black market where everyone knows where to buy something that is supposed to be illegal but they buy it anyway because it is needed and not available elsewhere.

When it suits us, we use spouses to support political campaigns or initiatives. When we are done with them, we expect them to disappear quietly to where they came from. Most First Ladies at National and State level have many stories to tell about this hypocrisy.

If we have democratic processes that are inclusive enough, the issue of 'problematic spouses' that keep being our reference point can be addressed in various ways. No one should have to vote for a Saint who goes home to the warm embrace of a dragon. We should not conflate the issues to do with the importance of spouses on the political scene with the track record of greedy, unscrupulous persons who have been operating in a context where there is no accountability. This is why I am happy that the recent Governors' Spouses Summit provided space for analysis and action on this issue.

I was asked to speak on a panel called, 'The 21st Century First Lady'. In my remarks I called for as many First Ladies as possible to support policy advocacy to ensure lasting change in our communities beyond our individual projects. Many of us are concerned about social issues such as children's well-being, women's livelihoods, health, poverty alleviation and peace, but we find ourselves restricted due to a lack of

legal, policy and institutional frameworks to address these issues comprehensively. Without the requisite laws and policies in place, all our efforts will amount to tackling symptoms as opposed to root causes. As First Ladies, I believe we should work collaboratively with other stakeholders, particularly civil society organisations, to scale up or sustain our work beyond our terms in office. There is a lot to be done as we strive to do our best sometimes under difficult circumstances and within the shortest time possible. Hopefully, we can all use these platforms to listen, learn, grow and share. In Michelle Obama's words, 'Becoming requires equal parts patience and rigor. Becoming is never giving up on the idea that there is more growing to be done.'

Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi is a Gender Specialist, Social Entrepreneur and Writer. She is the Founder of Abovewhispers.com, an online community for women. She is currently the 1st Lady of Ekiti State. She can be reached at BAF@abovewhispers.com



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RESTORING VALUES, ENHANCING IMPACT IN EKITI

Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi

My vision for our great state is that this is a place where people can thrive and live their lives in dignity. A place where workers do not labour in vain. A place where our young people do not roam the streets looking for jobs that are not there, a place where people are not hungry or resort to pilfering food to survive. A place where the cycle of generational poverty can be broken, and in which our elderly can reap the fruits of their labours over their children. A place where people are safe, healthy and prosperous.

With these words, read out in his inaugural address on 16 October, 2018, the second term in office of HE Dr. John Kayode Fayemi, (JKF) Governor of Ekiti State began. That was exactly one year ago.

It is hard to believe that a year has gone by so quickly. As I sat at the Ekiti Parapo Pavilion on October 16th last week observing the activities to mark the first anniversary, I smiled to myself when I thought of all the things, I said would be different this time around. For example, together with close associates, we extracted a promise from JKF that he would not work very late as he did during his first term. It was agreed he was to leave the office at 10 pm. After a couple of tries, this became unenforceable, so JKF is back to working till late or should I say very early.

Many times, after he comes home, he wants to keep on working until I insist on switching off the lights. In my case, I had said I would not stress myself out trying to solve everyone's problems. I convinced myself that I would no longer bother myself with the calls of people whose wives give birth and can't pay, those who have medical bills, weddings, funerals and the like. They would all be asked to go to the Ministry of Health, Women's Affairs or the Governor's office, anywhere but not my doorstep, I wish. So, one year later the long hours continue, the intense levels of community engagements and investments continue. However, this time, there seems to be a difference.

During the period known as JKF1 (2010-2014) JKF's efforts were taken for granted. Now, people know the difference and there are more appreciation and cooperation. This makes all the sacrifices worth it. The JKF2 administration has done an amazing job over the past year in the five thematic areas of focus – governance, infrastructure development, social investments, agriculture and rural development and knowledge economy. A strong foundation has been laid in all these areas through strategic thinking and planning, impactful programs and partnerships. Workers' salaries are being paid on time, as are pensions and subventions. School levies have been scrapped and enrolment levels are up again. Abandoned projects have come back to life. The Social Security Scheme for the elderly is back. The



three arms of government – the executive, legislature and judiciary, backed with a reformed, professional civil service, now operate as normal institutions should, devoid of meddling and theatrics. Donor partners and investors have been doing a relay run to indicate their interest. There is a whole lot more to be done, but there is hope, with the State in the hands of a visionary leader and a dedicated team.

Last week, JKF signed some new bills into law. One of them was a Transition Act, the first in Nigeria, which addresses the issue of continuity in governance. It is rather disturbing to note the impunity with which administrations abandon or ignore projects and policies put in place by their predecessors. Granted, not all initiatives can be taken forward if there are genuine financial constraints but the motives are usually to do with egos and vengeance. Every leader has a place in history, be it good or bad. It is counterproductive to abridge



A group photograph with NGFS middle is Chairperson of the NGWF, Mrs Bisi Fayemi

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programs meant for the well-being of people. No matter how imposing or expensive a structure is,

no Governor can uproot it on his way out of office.

In support of my husband's efforts, I have spent the past year picking up from where I left off in 2014. I was distressed to discover that the

Gender-Based Violence Management Committee that is the implementing body of the Gender-Based Violence Law of 2011, had not met in the past four years. The committee was revived by JKF in May 2019 and held its first



Senior Health Advisor NGF, Dr Abdulwahab Ahmad explains a point of Medical interest to the NGWF Chair

meeting in five years. In December 2018, as part of the global 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence campaign, we convened a meeting to assess what needed to be done to address GBV issues in the State, now that there was renewed political will. There was a



Chairperson of NGWF & First Lady of Ekiti State, Mrs Bisi Fayemi, presides over a meeting at the NGFS

consensus that the 2011 Law needed to be updated to address emerging issues as well as stiffer penalties. As a result, the GBV Law of 2011 was repealed and a new law took its place. The new law harmonises the GBV Law of 2011, the Violence against Persons Prohibition Act of 2015 as well as old local laws covering Female Genital Mutilation and Widowhood Practices. In addition to the stronger law, a Sex Offenders Register is in place, with a Name and Shame Policy for sex offenders. Perhaps because victims of violence or their families believe they will get justice if they come to my office, I am often inundated with pleas to help or intervene in such cases. The Ministry of Justice seconded a Lawyer to work on such cases that are brought to me so there is now a Gender and Vulnerable Persons Unit that handles these cases and ensures that victims get the support and justice they need.

I have also been working on a Keep Girls in School Project, to raise awareness on the need to keep girls in school for as long as possible. Even though education is free in Ekiti State, many children are running around and rates of teenage pregnancy are on the higher side. The Ekiti State Government has therefore taken the unprecedented step of putting measures in place to ensure that if girls get pregnant, they can stay in school till it is time for them to have their babies. When they deliver their babies, they can go back to school. If a problem like this is not addressed it means that years from now Ekiti State will be short of Lawyers, Doctors, Engineers and so on because hundreds of girls fell through the cracks.

During the JKF1 period, I supported a Food Bank Project for the elderly, widows and orphans. Now the project is up and running again, but focused on the elderly and known as 'Ounje Arugbo' as a complement to the social security scheme of the government known as 'Owo Arugbo'. Last year, I found out that based on recent statistics, Ekiti State ranks third in the country with Female Genital Mutilation prevalence. I was horrified. As a result, in addition to the community sensitization and awareness strategies that have been the conventional approaches, I decided to try something I had seen work in other African countries.

While I was at the African Women's Development Fund, we had supported several FGM projects in Mali and Kenya which had an economic empowerment component. In exchange for support with alternative livelihoods, local circumcisers volunteered to stop the practice. In September 2019, we began a series of 'Dropping the blades' ceremonies, during which local circumcisers and community leaders agree to end the practice in exchange for economic empowerment opportunities. So far it has been hugely successful and I am hopeful that this will save thousands of little girls from this harmful and outmoded practice.

Everywhere I go in the State, I advocate for healthy living, cancer awareness, attendance of ante-natal programs and use of healthcare facilities, as well as the importance of having women in leadership positions. On the whole, it has been an interesting year, with high and low moments. I was devastated after the Federal University of Oye incident in September when two students lost their lives after a peaceful protest turned violent. It was appalling how some elements tried to politicise the tragic death of the students. I know that public life comes at a price and sometimes it can be painfully high.

I am proud of my State, Ekiti, and the Land of Honour. I am proud of my Governor, HE Dr. John Kayode Fayemi, CON. I am proud of my husband, comrade and friend, he is simply the best. Thank you JKF, for restoring the values of Ekiti people, values of respect for hard work, integrity, honesty and truth. I did not want to write this article. I did not want to be accused of praise singing my husband. I, however, choose to write to bear witness to his humanity, diligence, service, and love to his people and country. I choose to salute his doggedness, courage, and tenacity. I choose to write this from my heart, not because I am paid to do so or because I want to prove I am loyal. I write this because it is the truth. Leaders like him are very hard to come by, and it is my prayer that more like him are encouraged to engage in the political arena.

Viva Ekiti! Viva JKF! Viva Nigeria!



Asmau Yari advocates sustainability of pet projects

The former chairperson of Nigeria Governors' Wives Forum (NGWF) Hajia Asmau Yari has stressed the need for the wives of governors of the 36 states of the federation not to discontinue their pet projects after leaving office, describing it as a key to national growth and development.

Hajia Asmau Yari had recently stressed the need for former First Ladies to choose pet projects based on the critical needs of their citizenry to hit at the core of their solutions because pet projects, she said, should serve as a major avenue through which Governors' wives are touching people's lives.

Speaking exclusively to EXECUTIVE SUMMARY Hajia Asmau Yari said that her pet project has continued. She recently donated relief materials to the sick and needy.

According to her: "A Governor's wife must prioritize pet projects for national growth and development. For any governor's wife that has a pet project, what such person must first think of is continuity of the pet project. Pet projects should not be halted after you are no longer in office. Because in the end, it is all about touching people, helping children and liberating women.

"My pet project has continued. Recently, we went round to the hospital and donated items in our little way to hospitals, although our support will not be going to be the same like before when you are in office as the mother of the state, we will keep giving back to the society.

"We have so many people in dire need of humanitarian support and I don't think pet projects should be focused on when you are in the office alone. There are so many ways to reach out to children and women." Hajia Asmau Yari also stressed the need for women to get involved in politics as they are poised to bring great gains to the people.

She decried low participation of women in Zamfara politics, decrying that no woman currently holds any political position.

"Zamfara, for instance, is a very conservative state it was born out of Sokoto state, so you cannot compare the women in Kaduna to that of Zamfara. In Zamfara women are not given a chance. In Kaduna, Kano and Bauchi for instance women are giving more chances.

"But like I said times are changing, women now know their rights more. Because in Zamfara we don't have a female political office holder. But gradually we will get there. Although it is very challenging. In Zamfara religion is been used to relegate women and it breaks my part because I do see lots of women that have potentials even more than men. I keep telling my husband to give women a chance," she said.

Hajia Asmau Yari also lamented that even women and children with special needs have become targets of sexual violence.

She said the forum has done several advocacy on girl child education, molestation, rape, adding that laws have been passed in the State Assembly to combat the menace.

"At this time, we must come together as mothers to have one voice. There are lots of stigmatization and then, there is a need for victims to come out because rape cases are now rampant and it breaks my heart because the offenders or culprit are people who are asked to take care of the



girl child or a relative," she said.

Hajia Asmau Yari also congratulated the wife of the Chairman of Nigerian Governors' Forum (NGF), Erelu Bisi Fayemi who emerged as the chairperson of the forum.

"I know she can do it because she is active and intelligent," she said, adding that she is wishing her the best.

"I also want to thank all the wives of the Governors. I want to thank them for their patience and love. I also want to thank the wife of the President Mrs Aisha Buhari because she was the one that brought us together to form this forum and also champion what this forum is doing right now because initially there was Southern Governors Wife Forum and there was Northern Governors Wife Forum and I was the chairperson of the Northern Governors Wife Forum for two years but she brought us together, we interact and put our hands together as she pushed us to excellence.

"I will also like to wish that the forum has a Secretariat where members will meet quarterly and come together to have a meeting and discuss ways to move our advocacy forward," she added.



I KEEP TELLING MY HUSBAND TO GIVE WOMEN A CHANCE – ASMAU YARI ABUBAKAR

In this interview with Halima Ahmed, Publications officer of NGF, former Chairperson of the Nigeria Governors' Wives Forum (NGWF), Hajia Asmau Yari Abubakar, stresses the need to give more women a role in government. The former Chairperson of the NGWF also enjoins First Ladies to choose a sustainable aspect of society when contemplating a pet project, adding that it should not be halted after they are no longer in office. A modest woman, Asmau Yari Abubakar refuses to take the credit for founding the Nigeria Governors' Wives Forum. Excerpts:

Who conceived the idea of the Nigeria Governors Wives Forum? I will not want to say I came up with the idea. But if I can remember I came into office in 2011 as a wife of a governor during the former President Goodluck Jonathan administration. If I can remember clearly the chairman of the governor's forum was Rotimi Amaechi but, the governor's wives did not have a forum then. But immediately a current government was elected in 2015 the election that brought in President Muhammadu Buhari, my husband became chairman of the Nigeria Governors' Forum and the wife of the President Aisha Buhari said you are the wife of the chairman and you have the experience as the wife of the governor for four years and this is a second term you can carry other governors' wives along. I can say we came up with the idea with the wife of the President and I took over naturally as the Governors' Forum Chairperson. We felt we needed a platform where new and old governors' wives can put heads together to have a good relationship and it helped because someone from the northwest can have an idea of what is happening in the southwest. We shared different stories, different problems affecting women, including women empowerment, girl



child education, health issues concerning women and children in any given state.

Also, I will want to congratulate Mrs. Fayemi as the chairperson. I know she can do it because she is active and intelligent, and I wish her the best. I also want to thank all the wives of the Governors. I want to thank them for their patience and love. I also want to thank the wife of the President, Mrs Aisha Buhari, because she was the one that brought us together to form this forum and also champion what this forum is doing right now because initially there was Southern Governors Wives' Forum and there was Northern Governors Wives Forum and I was the chairperson of the Northern Governors Wives Forum for two years but she brought us together, we interact and put our hands together as she pushed us to excellence. I will also like to wish that the forum has a Secretariat where members will meet quarterly and come together to have a meeting and discuss ways to move our advocacy forward.

So how do you engage women on issues bordering on health, environment sanitation?

We tend to streamline our activities with that of the wife of President Aisha Buhari if she attends our forum meeting and she is planning a program to touch lives we tend to replicate it. If she has a program on health issues like malnutrition, cancer or girl-child education, we adopt it and take it back to our various states to see how we can push it further, and try and break it down, translate it and ensure we communicate the message to the people in the local languages they understand to ensure success of such program. We endeavor to make women understand the message.



I KEEP TELLING MY HUSBAND TO GIVE WOMEN A CHANCE

Tell us about your pet project, how does it impact the people now that you are out of office?

A Governor's wife must prioritize pet projects for national growth and development. For any governor's wife that has a pet project what such person must first think of is continuity of the pet project. Pet projects should not be put to a halt after you are no longer in office. Because in the end, it is all about touching people, helping children and women. My pet project has continued. Recently, we went around to the hospital and donated items in our little way to hospitals, although our support isn't going to be the same as before when you are in office as the mother of the state. We will keep giving back to the society. We have so many people in dire need of humanitarian support and I don't think pet projects should be focused on when you are in the office alone. There are so many ways to reach out to children and women.



What should be the best personality and qualities of a chairperson of the NGWF?

Definitely, the chairperson of the governors' wives forum must be very articulate, she should communicate with all governors' wives, and she should be very active and know that she has a home in other states because if a co governor's wife is having a program in Imo for instance, I think the wife of the chairperson should endeavour to go there to support it as it will go a long way to make the governor's wife to further come together.

Like I said when we started, we put our heads together, like for me there are many states that I have never visited in the country. I have no business going there but, as the leader, lots of governor's wives will invite

you for a programme. What we tend to do is that we will find out people who are available through our various platforms, we will go there support her, so that helps our relationship, we are now more like sisters. Even out of office we still call ourselves to check up on each other to discuss ways to be more self-reliant and give back to society. Some of us are in our 40s, 50s some 60s and some are already grandparents. So, we are more like one big happy family and all thanks to the NGWF.

How true is the assertion that the first lady is a free employee of the state?

Well, this is because whenever and wherever her service is needed, she has to be there because a lot of people are looking up to her. It is so difficult when you are in the spotlight. Whatever you do and say matters, you have to divide your time and understand how to go about it.

Do you still cook?

I do, I love cooking, I enjoy cooking but, sometimes I don't have the time. But, now am not very busy and I still go to the kitchen but, not always.

What do you do differently then?

For you to be a good leader you have to be a good listener because you can't handle everyone's problems but when you listen to them you can proffer a solution.

I can recall that we do make a donation as a group and we went to a local government in Ogun for instance, and we dug a borehole project on behalf of the Nigeria Governors' Wives Forum and we sometimes donate money when we need to congratulate someone very important on national dailies.

What's your advice to women who want to join politics?

Zamfara, for instance, is a very conservative state. It came out of Sokoto state, so you can't compare them with the women in Kaduna. In Zamfara women are not given a chance. In Kaduna, Kano and Bauchi for instance women are given more chances. But like I said times are changing. Women now know their rights more. Because in Zamfara we don't have a female political office holder. But gradually we will get there. Although it is very challenging. In Zamfara religion is been used to relegate women and it breaks my heart because I do see lots of women that have potentials even more than men. I keep telling my husband to give women a chance.

IN

**KADUNA, KANO
AND BAUCHI
FOR INSTANCE
WOMEN ARE
GIVEN MORE
CHANCES. BUT
LIKE I SAID TIMES
ARE CHANGING**



NGF MEETS BMGF/DANGOTE FOUNDATIONS IN SEATTLE

By Muhammed Bello

Initially when Gov. Aminu Waziri Tambuwal of Sokoto state planned his official trip to Seattle where he and his colleagues would meet two global Giants committed to continental development of Africa and Nigeria in particular, he didn't reckon that he would end up being the leader of the high-powered Nigerian Governors' Forum (NGF).

The responsibility became his fortuitously after the Chairman of the NGF, Gov. Kayode Fayemi withdrew his International Passport awaiting approval for his visa application from the United States embassy in Abuja. This made Gov. Tambuwal, NGF Vice Chairman, to lead the delegation, arriving ahead of some of his colleagues in Seattle from Jeddah in Saudi Arabia, where he met with the leadership of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Both the Jeddah and Seattle meetings bore some resemblance as they focus on developmental issues that would improve the lives of the people of the states in the country. While in Jeddah, Gov. Tambuwal and his entourage were received by Dr Mansur Mukhtar, the Vice President (Country Programs and Sector Operations), Islamic Development Bank (IDB). The meeting focused on agriculture, health, education and infrastructure funding. It was described as "very fruitful," by Gov. Tambuwal, who added that "the IDB meeting is tailored to benefit Sokoto state very soon."

Upon departing Jeddah, Tambuwal and some members of his entourage landed in Seattle, United States of America where, this time, under the auspices of the NGF, they met Bill Gates and Alhaji Aliko Dangote, the duo chairmen of Gates and Melinda Foundations as well as the Dangote Foundation.

During the Seattle parley the governors including: Inuwa

Yahaya (Gombe), Bala Mohammed (Bauchi), Dapo Abiodun (Ogun), Abdullahi Sule (Nasarawa), Babajide Sanwo-Olu (Lagos), Abdullahi Umar Ganduje (Kano) and Prof. Babagana

Umara Zulum; explored developmental issues relating to education and water supply, particularly dwelling on accessibility, conducive environment for teaching and learning, as well as quality control with the two foundations.

On the second day, Gov. Tambuwal of Sokoto State again took center-stage in Seattle, where a round table dis-

cussion between the NGF, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and Dangote Foundation, "focused on health care issues and human capital development."

According to, "the interactive sessions in which my colleagues and I participated along with the foundations' teams, key federal and state level sector health leaders from Nigeria, brainstormed on the link between health and human capital development.

"The conference also discussed current country performance, benchmarking local and international development indicators, and engagement of participants in solution-based learnings and discussions to co-create opportunities for improved health and human capital development," the governor stated.

Also speaking at the parley, Governor Inuwa Yahaya of Gombe state stressed his commitment



THIS INITIATIVE, PIONEERED BY GATES IN 2012, WAS A WAKE-UP CALL TO ALL THE GOVERNORS TO "DELIVER A DRAMATIC IMPROVEMENT IN POLIO AND ROUTINE IMMUNIZATION"



NGF MEETS BMGF/ DANGOTE FOUNDATIONS IN SEATTLE

to the full implementation of the Primary Health Care Under One Roof, PHCUOR program.

The governor who attributed half of the successes recorded by the Village Health Worker Scheme in his state, reiterated that he plans to scale up the remaining half is imperative.

The governor appreciated the long-standing partnership between Gombe State government and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation which dates back to over 10 years, promising to sustain and strengthen the relationship for the benefit of the people of the state.

While underscoring the importance of investing in health and education, the Governor expressed a resolve to block leakages in order to harness more funds for human capital development. He assured the August gathering of his resolve to provide all counterpart funds of \$250,000 needed to support improvement in primary healthcare and basic education.

This counterpart funding is part of the \$1 million set aside annually by the Gates Foundation to ensure that healthcare delivery is at its optimum in Nigerian states. This initiative, pioneered by Gates in 2012, was a wake-up call to all the governors to

“deliver a dramatic improvement in polio and routine immunization” by the end of that year.

The billionaire had pledged back then that “the states that meet the threshold criteria will be awarded \$500,000 grant” by his foundation.

“The award will support winning governors’ priority initiatives in public health, such as malaria and tuberculosis, improving immunization, HIV prevention and treatment, or safe drinking water and hygiene promotion,” the Gates Foundation pledged.

Since Gates’ forages into Nigeria and his partnership with the NGF, the Aliko Dangote Foundation (ADF), a philanthropic outfit driven by Aliko Dangote has keyed into its objectives.

Accordingly, the main thrust of the Foundation “is to reduce the number of lives lost to malnutrition and disease.” Basically, the Foundation aims to combat Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) in children, improve the outcome of children’s lives by “using our investments in health, education, and economic empowerment to help lift people out of poverty.”

– Contributed by Muhammed Bello, SA
Media to Gov Aminu Tambuwal.



STATE GOVERNMENT ACHIEVEMENT/ POLICY THRUST ON AGRICULTURAL SECTOR: NORTH CENTRAL ZONE

North Central zone consists of the following states: Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger and Plateau. North Central states government-specific policy thrust/achievement in the agricultural sector are discussed below:

1. BENUE STATE

Benue State is called the food basket of Nigeria. Agriculture is the mainstay of the state's economy, engaging over 75% of the population. Benue State is the nation's acclaimed food basket because of its rich agricultural produce which includes: yam, rice, beans, cassava, sweet potato, maize, soybeans, sorghum, millet, sesame, cocoyam, fishery, etc.

The state accounts for over 70% of Nigeria's Soybean production.

The following are the accomplishments of the state in the agriculture sector:

1. Built Agro-Processing Factories in six LGAs under SDGs.
2. In Collaboration with IITA, AfDB, WFP, FAO and IFAD, the state has improved agricultural productivity through training, demonstration and use of new seedlings.
3. Procurement of 50 tractors in promoting mechanized farming.
4. More civil servants have become farmers through the state's 3-month scheme that allows civil servants free Fridays during planting and harvesting seasons to engage in agricultural activity.
5. The Fertilizer Blending Plant has been revived, and now supplies part of the state fertilizer needs. The government also subsidizes both Organic and chemical fertilizer by 38% and distribute it to farmers across the state.
6. Agriculture has been made a business to increase the income of farmers.
7. Partnership with Nigeria Zero Hunger Forum



and International agencies including IFAD, IITA to promote Food Security.

8. Construction of laboratories, classrooms and renovation at Akperan Orshi College of Agriculture, Yandev.

9. In partnership with Bank of Industry which made N2billion available for loans at only 5% interest to Benue farmers and other industrialists.

10. Over 13,500 people trained in best agricultural practices

11. Supports Fadama III additional Financing Development project.

The new administration's policy thrust is to continue to industrialize agriculture to ensure value addition through the following:

1. Empowerment of Farmers to know the benefits of value addition through processing. Processing of their produce like Cassava, rice, maize, yams, and Soya-beans before selling.

2. Empowerment of farmers to explore the state arable land for best results and increase the PPP relationships.

3. Revitalization of agriculture extension services and agricultural shows at both the local and state government levels.

2. KOGI STATE

Like Benue, agriculture is the mainstay of the Kogi State economy. The dominant crops in the state are coffee, cocoa, palm oil, cashew, ground-



THE FERTILIZER BLENDING PLANT HAS BEEN REVIVED, AND NOW SUPPLIES PART OF THE STATE FERTILIZER NEEDS. THE GOVERNMENT ALSO SUBSIDIZES BOTH ORGANIC AND CHEMICAL FERTILIZER BY 38% ...

...CONTINUED ON PAGE 18



Ondo and Osun govts



Ihedioha of Imo, Rivers and Anambra States



Dr



Tambuwal listens to DG NGF, Okauru



Meeting in session



Ihedioha of Imo standing

PHOTOSPEAK



Fayemi, Rt. Hon Tambuwal and Gov el-Rufal



Makinde in handshake with Ayade, Ihedioha looks on.



Adamawa's Gov Fintiri in a chat with Zamfara's Matawalle



Ortom of Benue makes a point at the meeting



Dep Govs of Anambra, Akwa Ibom and Rivers



A.A Sule of Nasarawa has the floor





STATE GOVERNMENT ACHIEVEMENT/POLICY THRUST ON AGRICULTURAL SECTOR: NORTH CENTRAL ZONE



nuts, maize, cassava, yam, rice, and melon. The state's accomplishments are listed below:

1. Encourage Youth to key into farming through orientation, sensitization, mechanization and inputting subsidies.

2. Facilitating loans for farmers to encourage mechanization and improved production of food.

3. Clearing of 1000 hectares of land across the state which were allocated to youthful farmers with farm inputs and agric machines services.

4. Procurement of 375 Fergus Tractors with complete implements, three quantities each for mini harvesters, planters, broom sprayers, rice reapers and other similar equipment to enhance agricultural activities and boost

production.

5. Procurement and assemblage of 1500 Tillers distributed to small scale farmers in 2017.

6. Along the value chain, agriculture has created about 20,000 jobs for Kogites, thereby depopulating the unemployed demography in the state.

7. Cultivation of 3000 hectares of rice and 5000 hectares of cassava in the state.

8. In order to bridge the gap in vegetable production using the advantage of the nodal location of the state, the State Government has established a state of the art greenhouse Farm at Osara to produce tomatoes and other vegetables.

9. Keying into the Central Bank of Nigeria's Accelerated Agricultural Development Scheme (ADS) through the payment of the State's counterpart fund, the Ministry of Agriculture has constructed 500 fishponds as a pilot scheme and have been handed over to over 1000 youths across the state to own and operate.

10. In a related development, over 300 youths will also be empowered in Akpata Ega in Idah Local Government Area, where 400 ponds have already been constructed. This is being replicated in all the Senatorial Districts in the state. The main scheme is targeting 10,000 youths across Kogi state.

11. In collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, the State Government took delivery and distributed 76 truck-load of inorganic fertilizer to farmers at a subsidized rate to boost soil fertility.

12. As the leading producer of Cassava in Nigeria and coupled with the guaranteed security of investors, Kogi State has been able to attract the biggest ethanol company in Nigeria known as Unicane. The company uses cassava as its main raw material, thereby sparking massive production of the crop.

13. Though the Federal Government National Egg

Production Scheme, 135 youths are empowered with N4.2 million each to support poultry farming.



14. The state government has also empowered hundreds of youth to grow rice in the riverine areas of the state.

15. Thousands of farmers across the state have benefitted from the Anchor Borrowers Scheme of the Federal Government.

16. Ongoing construction of the Kogi State Rice Mill at Omi. Apart from the massive Mill at Omi,



STATE GOVERNMENT ACHIEVEMENT/POLICY THRUST ON AGRICULTURAL SECTOR: NORTH CENTRAL ZONE



5. NIGER STATE

Niger state agricultural economy is based largely upon internal markets, subsistence agriculture, and the export of raw commodities. The following are the state's achievements:

1. Partnering with a foreign investor to create 4,000 jobs from rice production in Borgu and Bida local government areas.
2. Directing the government to convene a board meeting of the Badeggi Rice Mill to kick start the process of creating 15,000 jobs from the mill and the value chain.
3. Approval of the expansion and funding for the Tagwai livestock farm
4. Initiating partnership with Notore and others to create thousands of jobs in agriculture
5. Purchase of 15,000 metric tonnes of assorted fertilizers for the cropping season.
6. Rehabilitation of some concrete ponds and constructed earthen others to boost fish fingerlings production at the Tagwai Fish Hatchery, as well as procured assorted fishing inputs to be sold to fishermen in the State.
7. Procurement of boats and outboard engines to revitalize patrol and surveillance activities of the State's vast water bodies to ensure judicious exploitation for sustainable productivity.

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**EHABILITATION
OF SOME
CONCRETE
PONDS AND
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BOOST FISH
FINGERLINGS
PRODUCTION**

8. Repairs of 32 tractors and 4 Heavy Duty Equipment to facilitate farm mechanization and opening up of more land for agricultural purposes.

9. 500ha of rice field under cultivation in 2016 by a private investor, PJS Agro Farm Group and the KOICA Modern Integrated Rice Processing Complex.

10. 248 Power-tiller/ mini tractors were coupled, serviced and distributed to farmers across the state.

11. The State Government also keyed into CBN-Anchor Borrowers Programme in which 7,358, 7,172, and 785 farmers of rice, soybean, and cotton respectively benefited during 2016 rain-fed season

12. The state conducted Pre-season training for Extension, Rural Enterprise Development (RED) and Planning Monitoring and Evaluation (PME) Departments.

13. Rehabilitation of four irrigation schemes at Loguma, Edozhigi, Eddo while construction of irrigation scheme at Egbanti

is ongoing, totally averaging 60% completion.

14. Agricultural Equipment Hiring Enterprise (AEHE) Centre, which is now fully operational, was constructed at Majin Gari and equipped with five tractors and implements, while two additional AEHE Centres at Kontagora and Kuta are currently at 50% completion stage, these are aside ongoing work on 10 aggregation centres across the state.

15. Improvement of six irrigation centers at Guzan, Gbakogi, Chanchaga, Zara, Lloji, and Papiri.

16. Training of 210 unemployed youths and women on various agricultural enterprises in collaboration with RAISE Foundation and assisted with grants as starter packs for them to find their preferred businesses.

17. For the rain-fed cropping season, the administration procured liters of liquid fertilizer (NPK, Urea and Boron), certified seeds (rice, sorghum for Production Clusters) and litres of herbicides (Touchdown and solitor).

18. A total of 100ha land sites have been identified and cleared in 10 locations of 3 Local Government areas. Another 100ha have been identified in Kontagora and Shiroro for rice value chain.

6. PLATEAU STATE

Agriculture is the major occupation of the people. Acha (a grain known as "hungry rice") and millet are the chief cash crops; yams, sorghum, corn (maize), potatoes, cowpeas, rice, fruits, and vegetables are the staple crops.



STATE GOVERNMENT ACHIEVEMENT/POLICY THRUST ON AGRICULTURAL SECTOR: NORTH CENTRAL ZONE



The state achievements in the agricultural sector include:

1. Rehabilitation of the Panyam Fish Farm under Private Public Participation arrangement with Solbec Ltd.
2. Conducted Farmers summit, the first of its kind in the state, which will enable the state to come out with agricultural law.
3. Creation of farmer's database. In collaboration with the Peace Building Agency, there is also a dialogue committee to settle farmers' and herders' disputes.
4. Provision of 400 tractors to Farmers Co-operative at 40 per cent subsidy.
5. Provision of farm inputs such as fertilizer, seeds, herbicides, insecticides, vaccines, etc.
6. The state has several collaborations with international and national development partners. For example, Fadama 3 World Bank project. The state collaborated with the African Development Bank for potatoes projects worth over \$8million.
7. The state has completed the process for the release of three uncompleted projects from the Federal Ministry of Agriculture for the state to operate. They are Agro Farmers International Market at Heipang, and two (2) Agro One-Stop Centers at Mile-8-Fier, Pankshin and Garkawa

in Mikang Local Government Areas.

8. Establishment of Fadama Farmers Micro Finance Bank, Jos, which is fully operational.
9. Realigned the Ministry of Agriculture, Plateau Agricultural Development Programme (PADP), the Agricultural Services Training Centres (ASTC) and Marketing Ltd.
10. The Agricultural Services Training Centres (ASTC) has created sustainable awareness among farmers on modern farming and best agricultural practices, cultivated and serviced 18,465 farmers with 30,144 hectares of land, and held pre- and mid-season training for its officers for effective management and service.
11. In livestock production, mass vaccination of goats, cattle, poultry, dogs were carried out.
12. In collaboration with German International Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the state trained the farmers on the concept of farming, called the Farmer Business School (FBS).
13. To encourage partnership, the state signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Greenlands Integrated Agribusiness Limited for the setting-up of the following facilities: fruits and vegetables storage facilities; milk packaging plant and dairy/pig, swine genetic centre; poultry processing plant and Integrated Wind and Solar Power Generation Plant.

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**N LIVESTOCK
PRODUCTION,
MASS
VACCINATION
OF GOATS,
CATTLE,
POULTRY, DOGS**



STATE GOVERNMENT ACHIEVEMENT/POLICY THRUST ON AGRICULTURAL SECTOR: NORTH CENTRAL ZONE

others with smaller capacities are being constructed at different locations across the state.

3. KWARA STATE

There is no further need to disclose that agriculture is the main source of engagement of the economy of the north-central region of Nigeria and the principal cash crops in Kwara State are: cotton, cocoa, coffee, kola nut, tobacco, beniseed, and palm produce. Below are the state's achievements in the sector:

1. Kwara State in partnership with Cornell University, New York, University of Ilorin and Kwara State University designed Kwara Agricultural Modernization Master Plan (KAMP 2012-2017) to create agro-driven economic diversification and establish Kwara State as the sub-region economic hub. One of KAMP's main strategies was the development of the agriculture value chain in rice, soya, and cassava.

2. Under the Off-taker Demand-Driven Agricultural Activities (ODDA), the state has disbursed N214 million to 172 lead farmers for improved mechanized farming across the state.

3. Establishment of Kwara Agro Mall (KWAMALL), which provides loan facilities, subsidies, consultation, and equipment to farmers. The center bridges the gap between farmers and consumers by linking farmers with off-takers. Hundreds of farmers spread across the State have benefited from the activities of KWAMALL.

4. NASARAWA STATE

Nasarawa State is considered one of the major agrarian states in the nation with an average of 80% of its populace engaged in agriculture and agriculture-related activities such as farming, animal rearing, and agro-processing. Nasarawa's rich fertile soil is suitable for farming rice, soya, yam, sesame seed, maize, etc. The Dangote Group is in the process of establishing a multi-billion-naira rice and sugar company in the State. NSIA and UFF Agri Investment ac-

quired 3,500 ha for maize and soya farming and processing. Olam has 10,000 hectares of rice farm and mill in Nasarawa.

The thrust of the state's policy on agriculture is to commercialize agriculture farming by transiting from subsistence farming to high-valued commercial agriculture and ensure food security for the people of Nasarawa state while creating employment.

The focus of the government is to make Nasarawa the agricultural hub of the country through the revitalization of the subsistence agricultural economy and promotion of agricultural investment by providing the enabling environment to generate a higher and increasing proportion of the GDP and revenue of the State from agriculture.

In the pursuit of this policy objective, Nasarawa State Government will promote private sector participation in agriculture, which will be anchored on a robust policy framework and arrangements. The development of the agriculture value chain will cover farming, processing, storage, and helping to re-launch the State's economic base. The government will develop a Value Chain development program for selected products where Nasarawa has a comparative advantage as well as products with high local and international commercial potential. The specific objective will be to;

1. Enhance the business environment for local and foreign investors willing to invest in Nasarawa State agriculture, agribusiness and agro-industry; and use agriculture and agribusiness as a springboard for the development of entrepreneurship and economic change.

2. Create new decent and gainful jobs for youths in agriculture such that will make agriculture and agribusiness attractive for prospective entrepreneurs and managers

3. Create an enabling environment for agricultural development and seek to improve market access and trade;

4. Increase the number of privately run agro-processing businesses in Nasarawa, with a focus on value addition in prominent crops and livestock (e.g. yam flour, soybean oil, and flour, rice milling, maize flour, etc)

5. Promote modernization of farming through the provision of extension services, lending tractors scheme, irrigation systems etc.

6. Enhance incomes and earning the power of existing farmers and agribusiness players Expand the capacity of storage and refrigeration facilities for key crops (e.g. grain silos, dairy cold chain equipment).



THE FERTILIZER BLENDING PLANT HAS BEEN REVIVED, AND NOW SUPPLIES PART OF THE STATE FERTILIZER NEEDS. THE GOVERNMENT ALSO SUBSIDIZES BOTH ORGANIC AND CHEMICAL FERTILIZER BY 38% ...



Revenue conference report 2019



The NGF consultant Mike Abani and other participants at the conference

As part of the strategic mandate to provide a platform for peer learning, reflection and sharing of experiences on subnational issues, the Nigeria Governors' Forum Secretariat (NGFS) organized its 4th Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) Peer Learning Event (PLE) on 7 November, 2018 at Sheraton Hotel Abuja, with the theme: "Mobilizing Domestic Financing for Development".

The event is organized annually as a platform for federal and state tax authorities to discuss and share experiences on practical reforms that have led to improved revenue generation in the country. It also provides an opportunity for the Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF) to share lessons from its technical support programmes to states.

The 4th IGR PLE was attended by the Governor of Kaduna State, Mallam Nasir El-Rufai; Governor of Kwara State, H.E. Abdulfatah Ahmed, Governor of Edo State, H.E. Godwin Obaseki, the Executive Chairman of the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) and Chairman, Joint Tax Board (JTB), Babatunde Fowler, represented by the Executive Secretary of the Joint Tax Board, Sir Oseni Salawe Elamah, 13 Commissioners of Finance, 32 Chairmen of the Internal Revenue Service of States, 10 Executive Secretaries of States' Health Insurance Boards³ and 4 Commissioners of Health (see ap-

pendix for list of State participants). Also in attendance were Chief Bayo Awosemusi who represented the Nigeria Country Director of the World Bank, and Chris Okeke, representing Debbie Palmer, Head of the Nigeria Office of the Department for International Development (DFID).

The event opened with a welcome address by the Director-General of the NGF, Mr. Asishana Okauru represented by the Executive Director, Strategy and Research, Dr. L.O.T Shittu, followed by Keynote Addresses by the Governors of Kwara, Edo and Kaduna State.

The structure of the technical session followed a background paper presentation by David Nabena, Senior Economist, NGF on Mobilizing Domestic Financing for Development. Three technical paper presentations were delivered by Dr. Mark Abani, NGF IGR Consultant and David Nabena on Estimating the IGR Potential, Effort and Space of States; Mobilising Domestic Revenues to Finance Universal Health Coverage by Dr. Ahmad Abdulwahab, NGF Health Advisor; and Establishing a Consolidated Revenue Code for all State and Local Government Revenue Sources by Dr Mark Abani. Each presentation was followed by a panel discussion with selected State delegates and a question and answer session which paved the way for final conclusions.



Revenue Conference at the Transcorp Hilton, Abuja



FIRS Chairman, Fowler addressing Govs



An array of Govt officials at the conference



Gov Makinde speaking

The NGF hosted its partners and other revenue generating agencies to a meeting at the Transcorp Hilton. Those invited included FIRS, JTB, FRSC and others. More than ever before, the nation's revenue agencies are redoubling their efforts at Revenue mobilization and the NGF leads the game



Ben Ayade takes his turn on floor



Chairman of NGF, Dr JFK with DG NGF, Fowler of FIRS, Hassan of JTB in traditional attire is Gov Tambuwal of Sokoto



Fayemi discusses with the JTB's Hussein. Middle is Makinde of Ekiti State



IGR peer-learning event



New WB Country Director Shubham Chaudhuri meets NGF Chairman & Gov of Ekiti State Dr JK Fayemi



Gov Sani Bello discussing Economic Theories with NGF Senior Economist, David Nabena



The NGF & its ethos



State officials at the event



Breakout session in progress



DFID's meets CD of World Bank



JKF @ 1: A LOOK AT THE ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY OF A GOVERNOR

“Landlocked and resource-challenged, yet, we are a state of the big ideas; we are also blessed with a highly educated human resource and a leader with a clear vision of transforming the state in a hurry. Ekiti is ready for business,” - Biodun Oyebanji, Secretary to Ekiti State Government (July 18, 2019)

By Sunday A. Aniyi

This was the introductory remark made by Hon. Biodun Oye-banji, Secretary to Ekiti State during the visit of the African Development Bank Country Representative, Mr. Ebrima Faal and his team to Ekiti State as a follow up to the Abidjan visit to the President and Board of the bank by the Governor of Ekiti, Dr. Kayode Fayemi on infrastructure investment financing on some critical infrastructures in the State. The remark by Hon. Biodun Oyebanji to the AfDB team describes, in the most succinct manner, the Ekiti story and the challenge of development. For a starter, Ekiti is one but last on the federal allocation chart in Nigeria. It has a population of about three Million people, most of whom are peasant rural dwellers, artisan and civil servants. The state has about 80% literacy level, about 92% school enrollment, the highest number of graduates to population per national capita. Ekiti has a budget structure that tilts disproportionately to about 70% recurrent and 30% capital and unemployment level of about 17%. Life expectancy in Ekiti is 56% and 58% men and women respectively, slightly higher than the national average of 44% for men and 45% for women.

Ekiti has a large emolument and overhead cost with its highest number of public servants in relation to population in the southwest and perhaps the highest in Nigeria. The public service structure is top-heavy as many of the Ekiti public servants are highly educated and educationally mobile. The industrial profile of the state is hugely low and it is not uncommon for many to gleefully mouth that “Ekiti is a civil servant state” a dent that the Kayode Fayemi-led administration is working aggressively to correct.

The combination of low industrial and commercial activities in the state has led to the reality of low tax revenues and low economic activities to engender employment opportunity, a situation that has made public service work the major dream of the average young person. By implication, the state is always under huge financial constraints because of the very challenging financial

pressures it has to endure.

The situation was made worse by the absolute cluelessness of the immediate past administration that was succeeded by the current administration. The regime, widely known more for its notoriety for theatrics and gimmicks, had no plans whatsoever to end the circle of poverty in the state. Rather, the rumbustious regime left a near-collapsed state, with over 100 billion in loans, obligations and contractual agreements. The administration did not only leave behind a civil service that was completely demoralized because of months of unpaid salaries, pension and gratuity, the regime also left a mountain of debilitating debts, abandoned projects and dilapidated public infrastructure. So, when the administration of John Kayode Fayemi kicked off, it was a government that was born into serious economic challenges and a distressed socio-political environment. There was a general disillusionment about the ability of the government to right the gargantuan challenge it inherited, as many believed that it would be practically impossible to maintain a balance and keep the state running.

But not for Fayemi! He was well acquainted with the challenges and well apprised of what needed to be done. He was convinced that a good name is better than gold. He, therefore, started an aggressive diplomatic shuttle to first, reach out to the different federal agencies that could be of help in repositioning the state. He also needed to build confidence in federal institutions that had been treated with hostility in Ekiti during the tenure of the last administration.

For instance, while other states keyed into the anchor-borrower programme of the federal government for the development of some crops, notably rice, Ekiti state under the last administration, made daily abuse of the president and antagonism to the federal government official state policy.

During JKF1, many development partners were in Ekiti to support the state in many areas of development. Many of them left as soon as JKF1 ended because of the unfriendly and uncooperative attitude of the regime. For example, the World Bank assisted Urban Water Sector Reform programme which Dr. Kayode Fayemi's government, in the first tenure, had paid the Ekiti counterpart funding, could not continue because the succeeding administration was interested in contract award

MANY OF THEM LEFT AS SOON AS JKF1 ENDED BECAUSE OF THE UNFRIENDLY AND UNCOOPERATIVE ATTITUDE OF THE REGIME



and what it could benefit from it. Because this was inconsistent with the ethical practice of the Bank, it had to halt activities in Ekiti.

This freeze would later worsen the water situation in the state and ultimately get Ekiti the unflattering title of the first in open defecation in Nigeria. So, when Fayemi assumed duty, he made it a priority to regain the trust of the development partners that have left the state. Not only that, he embarked on aggressive diplomatic shuttles to the federal agencies that in involved in socio-economic and environmental programmes that could benefit the state. He visited the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development to ensure that Ekiti farmers benefit from the multi-billion naira anchor borrower finance. Luckily, his former agriculture commissioner during JKF 1 is the one in charge of the CBN-backed anchor borrower project. To show his commitment to the maximization of the federal state collaboration, the governor appointed an energetic young man as Special Adviser on Federal Matters whose role is chiefly to interface with the federal establishments and to ensure a smooth relationship.

Dr. Kayode Fayemi was at the Ministries of Water Resources, Works and Housing and Urban Development, Steel and Solid Minerals, Finance, Environment, CBN and other



federal government agencies that could be of help in the development of the state. He visited the headquarters, regional or country offices of the development partners to lobby them to come back to Ekiti. He also appointed an influential personality within the development partnership circle as his Special Adviser to manage the development partnerships. This has brought a lift in the relationship between Ekiti and the partners who are now having one programme or the other in Ekiti state. As a direct benefit of this diplomatic rapprochement, the World Bank has not only resumed in Ekiti, it is helping in the resuscitation of the abandoned water project. In addition, the Bank is helping in financing over 500 kilometres of rural roads across the state, under the Rural Access and Agricultural Marketing Programme (RAAMP) while the state will do 600 kilometers which translates to 1100 kilometers of rural roads; just as it is assisting in the implementation of the social insurance scheme for the elderly. In his recent visit to Ekiti state, the World Bank Task Team Leader, Engr. Fahard Ahmed remarked that the Governor was well respected in the World Bank system for his integrity and wide influence. According to him, "Ekiti state was added to the list of 22 states already on ground because Gov. Fayemi made a special request that was expressly accepted."

Not quite long ago, the Resident Coordinator of UN programme in Nigeria, Edward Kallon was in Ekiti with the full complement of his team to meet with the governor on issues of concerns to the organisation. He commended the governor for his seriousness and leadership in the promotion of education, gender, inclusion, social investment, governance, reforms and other critical segments of the Sustainable Development Goals. He extolled the virtues of the governor in being a reliable partner and a model for other governors in the attainment of SDG objectives.

Similarly, Ekiti state government has benefited from the counterpart arrangement with World Bank through the SEPIP programme in the revitalisation of the technical colleges in Ekiti State.

The technical college in Ado-Ekiti has been completely overhauled, rebuilt and reequipped and is probably the best in the country, while the other three more are being attended to. In a recent meeting with Ekiti state officials, the World Bank's African Social Development Special-

EKITI STATE GOVERNMENT HAS BENEFITED FROM THE COUNTERPART ARRANGEMENT WITH WORLD BANK THROUGH THE SEPIP PROGRAMME



A LOOK AT THE ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY OF A GOVERNOR

ists, Ms Senait Assefa observed that the governor was one of the "respected personalities in the governance of the country as one that has led in the area of social inclusion, gender-based violence prevention and care for the vulnerable." She pointed out that Dr. Kayode Fayemi was regarded and received in the development circle because of his understanding and promotion of development issues from a social development point of view.

Dr. Kayode Fayemi continues to receive accolades for his refined and honest approach to governance, focus on socio-economic development and practical provision of a solution to age-long problems. This was pretty well echoed by the Country Representative of the AfDB, Mr. Ebrima Faal during his visit to Ekiti. He noted that having worked with the governor during his days as a Federal Minister in the Ministry of Steel and Solid Minerals, he had absolute confidence in his character and ability to deliver on promises. He, therefore, pledged the support of the AfDB in the infrastructural development of the state.

As of now, talks on infrastructural development to the tune of about \$100 million have reached an advanced stage. This diplomatic engagement which has led the governor to visit the headquarters of AfDB in Abidjan, when finally consummated, will see to the dualisation of the Ado-Akure road, the development of Ekiti Smart City or Knowledge Zone and the Agric Processing Zone which is integrated to the Agro-Allied Cargo Airport.

The airport which is about 4000 hectares of land is expected to employ about twenty-five thousand people when fully operational. It is also an integrated development strategy to spur the agricultural policy of the state which intends to change it from peasantry to commercial agriculture. As of today, two big farms have sprung up in Iyemero-Ekiti both engaging in breathless massive cassava plantation. One of the farms is sitting on 3,500 hectares of land with 50 hectares already cultivated for cassava. The farm is well fitted with processing machines that can process 145,000 metric tons of industrial starch for export. The farm is also involved in the massive planting of vegetables both for local and foreign markets.

Ahead of the arrival of more commercial farmers, the state government has cleared over 1100 hectares of farmlands and built security posts for Agro-Rangers security personnel to protect the investments. Similarly, Promasidor has just signed an agreement with the government to manage the Ikun Dairy Farm that had remained moribund since it was established. The company is investing \$5million in equipment and facility to get the place working. As at now, the company has assumed duty at the Dairy and is already doing preliminary works to move in for full operation.

The governor has also entered into talks with Dangote, Coscharis, Stallion, and WATCO on the possibility of establishing their rice mill factories in Ekiti. Already, the government is revitalizing the Youth in Commercial Agriculture Programme to benefit them in the off-taker arrangement being worked along with this plan. All these are parts of the work plan to feed the cargo airport which is expected to serve the western geopolitical zone, with locally produced agricultural products.

Everywhere he had gone, Dr. Kayode Fayemi has earned a lot of respect



for his leadership skills and strong character traits which have won the state a lot of developmental mileage and drawn a lot of capital investment in the state.

Within a year, the governor has embarked on very productive engagements that have drawn investments and goodwill to the state. As a state with an almost arid financial profile, there is no doubt that the greatest assets of the state are the goodwill and human resources of its people. Ekiti is very blessed this time, to have a man who enjoys an immeasurable level of goodwill nationally and internationally. There is no arguing the fact that his quality diplomatic engagements and strategic partnerships have brought a lot of economic benefits to the state. Going forward, the next years and indeed, the future promises an exciting moment for the people of Ekiti as all the ongoing programmes crystallise into visible benefits for all. One can only but say, congratulations to the government and the entire good people of Ekiti.

– Dr. Aniyi is the Principal Private Secretary to Governor Fayemi.



Media Conference on Budget tracking



Premium Times joins NGF to train correspondents on budget tracking. Mojeed, Okauru and Jibia at the session



Conference in progress



Class in session



Participants group photo



Vanguards Henry Umoru canvasses a view point



Guardian's Mathew in class



Visits to the NGF



Dr Oscar Odigboh of Covenant University visits NGF, receives NGF publications.



Information Assistant of AfDB Nkiruka Ugoh at NGFS



*Dr Gianni of the
NGF takes a bride in
Ibadan, Oyo State.*

Pix 2: Families of the bride and groom.
Pix 3: NGFS well-wishers at the occasion





Send forth in honor of Rachid Ben Massaoud, redeployed Country Director of the World Bank in Nigeria



NGF Chairman, NGF DG Rachid Ben Massaouds



Governors @ Dinner



Gov Obiano & Rachid



Gov Oyetola & Ben Massaouds at the occasion



Gov Sani Bello, NGF Chairman, Fayemi and Shubham Chaudhuri, new Country Director of World Bank in Nigeria



NGF and the Ben Massaouds in a photograph



NGF Chairman Dr Kayode Fayemi at a speaking engagement in South Africa.
Pix 2: BUA Nigeria's Abdulsamad Isiaka Rabi and a guest.
Pix 3: Kwara Gov Abdulrazaq at the occasion

Channels Television's Sunrise Daily crew pay a courtesy call on the DG of the NGF and take a tour of the NGFS to meet the staff





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