

STRATEGIES AND METHODS OF



**DR. MU'AZU BABANGIDA ALIYU'S
ADMINISTRATION**

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FOREWORD

On the 29th may, 2007 when we came to power, it was made clear through the inaugural address that our purpose and focus in the government of Niger State was to further empower her in all ramifications and make people experience democracy as government of the people, by the people and for the people. We made it clear that Niger state was not incapable of socio-economic growth, and that given what it takes, the state would transform into a formidable human community within the Nigerian nation. We made our pledge based on our experience, determination and sincerity of purpose to create a new political dawn in which the populace would feel a sense of pride and belonging, and thereupon cling to fresh pillars of hope and golden platform of socio-political self realization.

Our resolve from that day till now, has been orchestrated by our belief in the people, and their capacity to absorb change which is the only constancy in human universe. We knew then, and now, that the people wanted change from stagnancy to development, abject lack to useful abundance, empty promises to fulfilled ambitions, and empty treasuries to a world of unending rich and prudent management, revenue generation and improved standard of living. We have always known that we have sufficient resources in the state, and on which we should be prepared to work hard for human progress. We realized that to make democracy work and achieve its purpose, poverty and lack in all ramifications should be removed; that impurities of political practice such as corruption, nepotism and ethnic chauvinism must be fought to a standstill; that all known cobwebs of uncertainty and doubts impeding our progress for so many years must be removed instantly. But then, all these ambitions often hang on good leadership.

And I have always believed that leadership has suffered a lot of misrepresentation, especially in our society. Yet, it should be understood that leadership is the art of mobilizing others to want to struggle for shared aspirations; leaders make work responsibilities fun, just as leadership is a dialogue and not a monologue. Leaders need operational plans, because they do not command and control but they serve and support. Leaders need to appreciate and articulate a shared vision for the future because their expected assignment should be a reciprocal process between those who choose to lead and those who choose to follow. Leaders are expected to search for opportunities for people to exceed their previous levels of performance because leadership is a performing art; a collection of practices and behaviors, not a position. Leaders are pioneers, role models in sincerity and trust, and can venture into unexplored territory and guide us to new and unfamiliar destinations. Leaders should change that business- as- usual environment even though they do not have to change history.

These are the features on which we have traded our eyes in the last two years of providing servant-leadership in Niger State. We took it upon ourselves to inform our actions with sincerity of purpose, diligence, and charisma, just as we strongly believe in the virtues of accountability and transparency, and zero tolerance for corruption, greed, and nepotism.

In order to positively affect the grassroots, we have since instituted the Jama'a forum (peoples parliament). We have provided basic health care facilities in rural places; we have constructed roads and bridges, and have improved on delivery of agricultural potentials in the state. We have equally strengthened the public service by improving the salaries of the workers; brought tourism development to the frontline; improved rural infrastructures; and standardized environmental sanitation. Poverty eradication, provision of

employment opportunities, construction of houses for accommodation and providing means of easy transport are some of the other efforts to which we have directed our enthusiasm, in the spirit of servant leadership. Also, the judiciary, local government council, wards development and security provision have gained our salient attention, because they are all variables of solid democratic experience. We have equally promoted the idea of public private partnership (PPP) in the provision of essential services and development of sites, to the satisfaction of our people. There is no doubt about it that the state government has enjoyed fruitful and positive relationship with the Niger State House of Assembly.

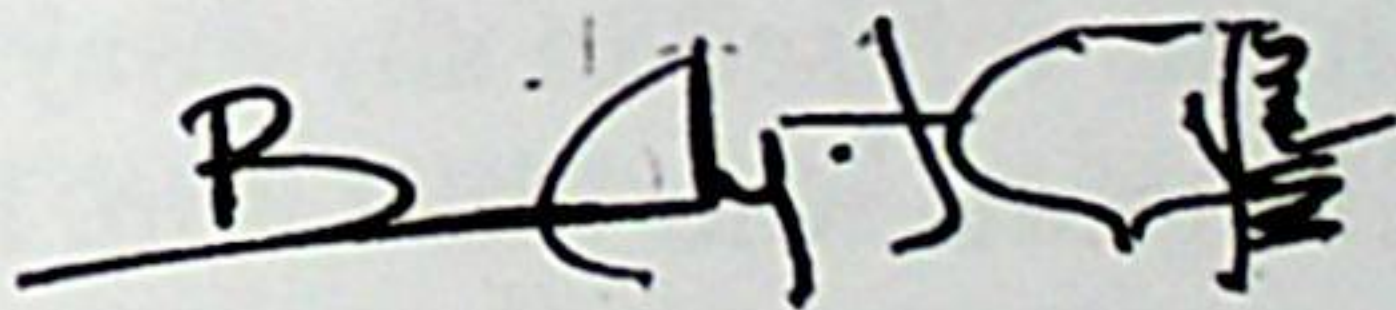
Our government has done a lot to improve the level of education, as well as the provision of water and electricity, developing the rural areas and focusing on commerce and industry as tools of progressive development. We stood up to withstand challenges which tried to cripple our efforts because we knew that change is never an easily accepted notion and experience in human circles.

We are happy to note that our modest efforts are being noticed by people from all walks of life, some of whom have decided to properly document same in different forms including books, which may be referred to by researchers, scholars, and concerned indigenes.

Without sounding immodest, I must agree that our efforts were immensely tasking, but our faith and believe in God Almighty, and our determination to succeed, despite all odds, have helped us thus far to remain focused and dedicated to the quest of providing good governance the type deserved by our people. In a recent press interview I had pointed out that "governance and leadership are all in the service of the people. The two religions, if you want to appreciate it better, indicate that governance is all about people; its about serving themBoth Islam and Christianity emphasize this role about leadership that you

are the servant of the people, its like serving God. So you serve humanity and serve God. By doing this, so we are trying to demystify this concept of governor or president or leadership generally so that people begin to appreciate that they have a right to demand of your time, of your resources, of your intellect. And when they demand you are likely to produce better things for them than when you are just a ruler trying to make things happen alone." I had added that "People keep deceiving themselves that they are excellent; excellent in what? I understand some people even quarrel when they are not called "Your Excellency". When I finish my assignment and people feel I have done well and whatever they want to call me I will take. But now I want to be remembered for doing something. What am I doing? Giving service to the people". I still hold strongly to these views.

Meanwhile, I appreciate the writing of this book, and I believe it will serve the interest of Nigerians and international scholars, historians, media workers and interested audiences.



Dr. Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu (OON)
Talban Minna,
Chief Servant of Niger State.

Introduction

The idea of a comprehensive publication, as a mid-term assessment effort, on the government of the Chief Servant, Niger State, Dr. Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu (OON) came up for two prominent reasons: to have a reliable data of information on the progressive ideals and commitment of the well received administration in the state, and to have what researchers, scholars, administrators, media workers and the general public can always refer to as a regime which has brought wealth of development to the state in the context of true, positive-oriented and people-interested 21st century administrative expectations.

The government of Dr. Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu, coming into being in May 2007, has been a remarkable departure from the common run of public administration in Nigeria because it is a regime which has refused to shy away from challenges or abandon the electorate who voted it in. In the areas of health, education, roads construction, infrastructural development, tourism, agriculture, communal manifestations, ward development and provision of potable water among other features, the government has remained focusedly poignant, decisive, and dedicated. The level of achievements in just two years is so appalling that people have kept wondering what happened in the past to the experiences of transparency and accountability.

Significantly, the radical Chief Servant has succeeded for many reasons. One of these is the strict adherence to the concepts of transparency and accountability, especially the

creation of the due process office which has been dutifully functional. Secondly, he is surrounded by lieutenants whose credentials remain strong and credit worthy, and by these are the Commissioners, Permanent Secretaries, Special Advisers and Special Assistants some of whom had done so well in their previous places of employment. These lieutenants, like the Chief Servant, himself, have been dynamic, focused, loyal and committed to the idea of public service.

Again, the Chief Servant has been leading by example: he is not hypocritical, and he keeps making stewardship statements and submissions in places where such are necessary to prove the sincerity of purpose and undoubted spirit of dedication, of his government. The results of these can be found in the improvement of standard of living of the people, and the way other state administrators generously speak of the success of the regime so far. Indeed, Talban Minna has equally been the Chairman of the Northern Governors' forum, and he has served to engineer the spirit of Sardaunism in the north, a concept which stands for anticorruption, anti-ethnicity self-reliance and anti-exploitation.

It is fervently believed that the regime will score more marks on behalf of the people of the State, a truth which history will be too eager to project progress.

In writing about the early life and background of Dr. Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu (Talban Minna), one is reminded of the Shakespearean saying that "*some people are born great, others acquire greatness while some have greatness thrust upon them*". Certainly, many have attained greatness through these means.

However, the case of Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu is indeed one with a difference as all the three factors combine to account for his greatness. And by the end of this Chapter, the reader would have been this.

Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu was born great. His parenthood is a fine blend of scholars, jurists, and royalty. Alhaji Aliyu Mu'azu, his father, was the son of Mallam Mu'azu Sakkwato, the renowned Islamic Scholar and Jurist who played a pioneering role in the establishment of Minna. Talba's father was also a Magajin Gari and later Sarkin Yakin Minna.

His mother, Hajiya Jami is a Princess from the Mallawa Ruling House in Zazzau Emirate. Her father, Mallam Umaru Likita is the great grandson of Sidi Abdulkadir, one of the founding Kings of the Mallawa Ruling Dynasty of Zaria. Sidi Abdulkadir was the son of Malam Musa, a renowned Islamic Scholar and Flagbearer of the Sheik Usman Dan Fodio-led Islamic

Jihad.

Indeed, one of the earliest signs of destiny playing out itself in shaping the greatness that the Talban Minna has attained in life was when at birth he was named Mu'azu, after his grand father and founder of the Mu'azu family in Minna. Of note here is that he was the first child in the family to be named after the great Malam Mu'azu Sakkwato.

Brief Biography Of Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu

Dr. Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu was born on November 15, 1955 in Paiko, 22 Kilometres South of Minna, to Alhaji Aliyu Mu'azu, the first Magajin Gari and late Sarkin Yakin Minna and Hajiya Jamila, a princess in the Mallawa Ruling House of Zazzau Emirate.

He had his early education at Kafin-Koro Primary School, Kuta Primary School and Central (Now IBB) Primary School, Minna between 1963 and 1969. He went on to the College of Arts and Arabic Studies, (now Mahmud Abubakar Gumi, College), Sokoto between 1970 and 1974 and obtained the Grade II Teacher's Certificate. Thereafter, he proceeded to the College of Education, Sokoto for his National Certificate of Education (NCE) which he obtained in 1977.

Dr. Babangida Aliyu did his one year mandatory National Youth Service between 1977 and 1978 at the Jubril Martins Memorial Grammar School, Iponri, Lagos.

He started his working career when he joined the Niger State Ministry of Education as Master III and later became Master II, from 1977 to 1983. Securing a white collar job immediately after his NCE programme did not deter him in his quest for self-development. Thus, he forged ahead with his educational pursuit as he proceeded to the Bayero University, Kano in 1980 where he graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in 1983.

Shortly before his graduation, his constituency thrust on him the challenge of leadership when they invited him to contest for election into the Federal House of Representatives. Consequently, in August, 1983, he withdrew his services from the Niger State Government, contested and won election to represent Minna South Federal Constituency.

But his service at the legislature was short-lived when on December 31, 1983, the Military toppled the NPN led government of Alhaji Shehu Shagari. Dr. Babangida Aliyu soon returned to the classroom in 1984

as he joined the College of Education, Sokoto as Lecturer.

In further pursuit of the Golden Fleece, Dr. Babangida Aliyu proceeded to the University of Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, U.S.A. for a Masters Degree in Public and International Affairs which he completed between January, 1985 and August 1986. He immediately enrolled for a Ph.D. programme in Strategic Studies and Political Economy which he completed in 1989.

He returned to Nigeria and was appointed as a Chief Political Affairs Officer in the Federal Civil Service. He rose to the position of Assistant Director and Head of Unit for International Affairs and Political Analysis in the Office of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation. In June, 1992, he was promoted and deployed as Director, Administration and Finance of National Council on Inter-Governmental Relations (NCIR). There, he was the pioneering Director in charge of setting up the administrative and financial structures of the agency. In August, 1993, he was posted to the Cabinet Secretariat of the Presidency as Director and was concurrently assigned to serve as Director of

Administration and Finance in the Constitutional Conference Commission between February, 1994 and May 1995. Dr. Babangida Aliyu was deployed as Director/Special Assistant to the Secretary to the Government of the Federation between October, 1996 and April, 1997. He also served as Director, Maritime Services in the Ministry of Transport between August, 1996 and April, 1999.

On 1st May, 1999, he was appointed Permanent Secretary and posted to the Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports. He was later redeployed to the Cabinet Secretariat. In January, 2001, he was deployed as Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Federal Capital Territory and later Permanent Secretary, National Planning Commission, Permanent Secretary (Establishment and Pension), Office of the Head of Service of the Federation from where he retired after the People's Democratic Party beckoned on him to contest in the governorship elections of April, 2007, which he won.

The Talban Minna had an illustrious career in the Civil Service. He served as a Director on the Boards of Nigerian Unity Line and Seaview Properties Limited and also a member of the Senior Management

Committee in the Office of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation between 1995 and 1999. He was member, Board of Governors, Centre for Democratic Studies between 1992 and 1995; member Tenders Board, of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation and member Kaduna Polytechnic Governing Council between 1980 and 1983.

Perhaps what may be regarded as the shortest span in office was his deployment to Establishment and Pensions Office in the Office of the Head of Service of the Federation as Permanent Secretary from January, 2007 to February, 2007.

Dr. Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu is highly versatile and has shown greater commitment to the welfare of the masses. He is a dauntless crusader and intrepid administrator whose passion for excellence in service is yet unequalled. His membership of many social organizations and people centred fora attests to this view. He was a member of the Executive Committee of the Parent-Teachers Association, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA; Chairman and Secretary Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) Lagos, National Auditor, Nigerian Union of Teachers' Headquarters; Vice-President, National Association of Public

Administration and Management; and President, Students Union, College of Education, Sokoto.

This erudite and itinerant scholar who has visited over 90 countries on the globe, particularly to present lectures, was once again, called upon by the good people of Niger State in Nigeria, to help them sanitize a polity that had for several years been plunged in the doldrums of socio-economic and political asphyxia.

Dr. Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu is a responsible family man who indeed believes in the words of the late Sage and philosopher, Marcus Kian: "Goodness is a great virtue; seek for it, find it and your name will be coded in the positive side of history".

He is married to Hajiya Jummai Babangida Aliyu (Nee Umaru Erena) and blessed with six children, four boys and two girls.

His hobbies include reading, writing and horse riding.

He was honoured with a National Honours Award of the Officer of the Order of the Niger (OON) in December, 2004. He was also conferred with the traditional title of Talban Minna meaning: Scholar in charge of education.

He has rendered extensive Community Service

both within and outside Niger State.

Childhood Leadership Traits

One of the hallmarks of great leader is the ability to identify challenges and offer to take the driver's seat in serving. The trait to voluntarily step forward and assume leadership has been in Dr. Babangida Aliyu since childhood.

A graphic explanation of this was given by his childhood friend, Mal. Muhammad Datti Usman (now Registrar of the Federal University of Technology, Minna) who was his classmate at the Kuta Primary School, and roommate at Bayero University, Kano. When they were in Primary 1, their teacher had asked who among them would like to be the Class Monitor. Pronto: the young Mu'azu raised his hand, when virtually every other pupil did not know what class captain meant. And that was how Mu'azu became the Class Captain, thus charting a course for himself along which his entire life would become patterned.

“Ever since then,” recalled Mal. Usman, *“anywhere we were as little boys, he always liked to lead. He always liked to be at the head of the group. Whether we were going for swimming, he always liked to be in front. Those days, we moved in groups, in good*

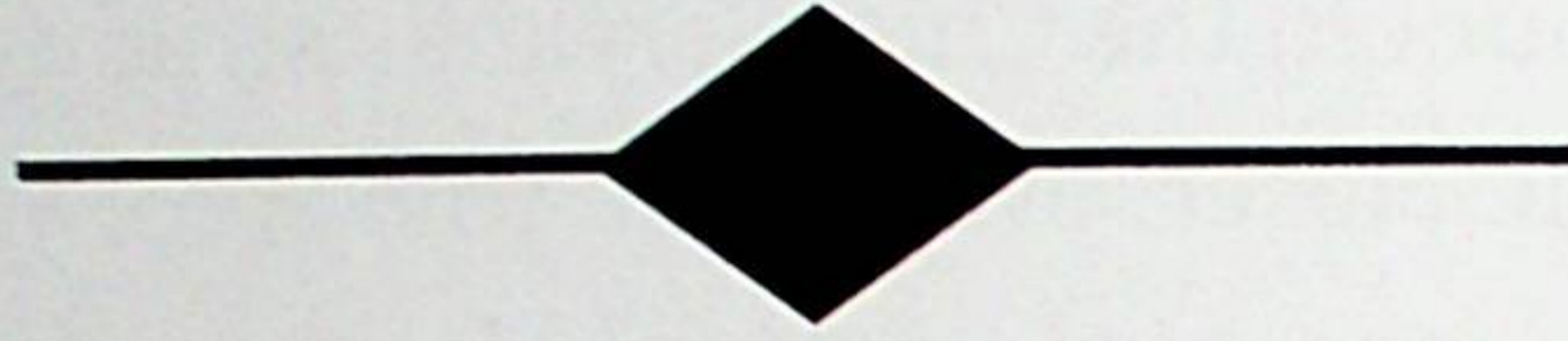
company. But when that group was there, he liked to lead”.

Recently, when Dr. Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu delivered the 50th Anniversary Lecture of Nigerian's premier University, the University of Ibadan, he drew an analogy between a true leader and a shepherd. Indeed, just as a shepherd protects his herd, so does a true leader protect his people at all times. He confronts his people's challenges and threats. Certainly, from childhood, the Talban Minna had exhibited this trait to protect his friends, even if it meant to fight for them.

An unforgettable incident was narrated by Mal. Usman. When they were at Kuta Primary School, there was one Hussaini Baushe who used to bully and taunt the young Mu'azu and his friends. He (Baushe), the son of a local barber was said to be a bit older than Mu'azu and his friends. So one day, the young Mu'azu and his friends decided to put an end to Baushe's “excesses”. And on behalf of his friends, Mu'azu the protective leader challenged Baushe to a fight near a pond. At the end of the battle, Mu'azu defeated Baushe and thus Baushe stopped taunting him and his friends.

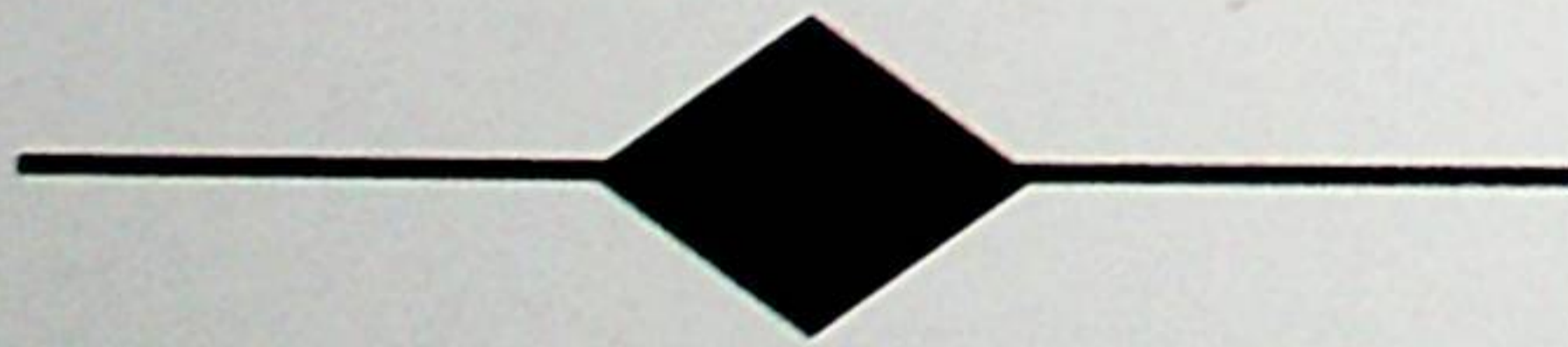
It is equally important for a leader to be able to maintain harmony in a social setting, despite

differences in ideology and other persuasions. Comrade Hamza Na'uzo, a lecturer at the University of Abuja, has known the Talban Minna since his youthful days. He recounted the Chief Servant's striking ability to bring people closer, even those who were younger: *"Most of us since our youthful days accepted his leadership. Then friends used to struggle among themselves to get closer to Talba to the extent he (Talba) would have to mediate among them to maintain peace"*.



Chapter Two

EMERGENCE OF THE CHIEF SERVANT



The German Philosopher Immanuel Kant says “leaders are born and not made”. But to the British Psychologist, Paul Wellington, “a leader is that person who is always ready to offer selfless service to the people, believes in the potentials of the people, interacts with them easily, and highly knowledgeable”. Yet, Professor A. Odoh says “a good leader must be a man of integrity, humility, and intelligence/knowledge.”

He must be humane, sympathetic, decisive, always desires for change; honest, disciplined, sensitive; always ensures that problems are solved; open, able to admit mistakes, able to absorb challenges; hardworking, courageous, kind; able to recognize the contributions of others, able to motivate people; a good communicator, a good listener; highly impartial in dealing with others; and with the ability to look at issues objectively.

Also worthy of note is the fact that the idea of a servant leader goes beyond these attributes. A good servant leader should be able to 'craft' great vision, mission, purpose and ideologies that would drive the society to greatness.

There is no doubt that Dr. Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu has demonstrated these qualities throughout his stint in the public service. His rich profile attests to this impression.

Pre-emergence Of The Chief Servant

It is only apt to remind Nigerlites of the missed opportunities and the disaster that situated the growth of the State and defined the last eight years prior to May 29, 2007. At best, this would enable a perspective analysis of yesterday, to locate where we are and lend us a handle to peck the nearest future.

When the apparatus of governance was handed to civilians in 1999, the exigencies of the time frustrated the progress of a thorough scrutiny of the new helmsmen. All manner of people slipped into the corridor of power. Unfortunately, in Niger State, the worst specimen of ruthless parasites saddled the affairs. They made little effort to disguise their nature and character and rode rough-shod and broke the back of Nigerlites. It was so nightmarish that by 2004, the government was all on its own, having been orphaned by the people. It had to abuse the coercive instruments of State power to cling on to office against the popular will.

On the eve of its departure, the State and economy lay prostrate, values mangled, and the people gasped for oxygen. This was in spite of the unprecedented infusion of billions of Naira from Abuja. Nothing could justify the huge criminal neglect and kleptomania that went on under that administrative *laissez-faire*.

Specifically, virtually all the infrastructure in the State were gradually collapsing, no meaningful projects were executed; and the euphoria of savouring the beauty of democracy with its most visible allure of the freedom to hold opinion and express same without fear of visit by State security operatives, died down completely in the State.

The Niger State Civil Servants became the least paid and the worst motivated. Their welfare was neglected and whatever experience and expertise they had were deemed worthless by the government. The consequences were devastating all round. The State, the government and the Civil Service suffered. The State lost money of course, but mainly the chance to make progress. The government lost the opportunity to write its name in gold and faced public ridicule and opprobrium. The Civil Service lost relevance.

Since the termination of the profligately-financed administration, many Nigerlites have begun to adjust psychologically to the new vision and mission of the present administration.

Emergence Of The Chief Servant

On the arrival of Dr. Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu to Niger State as the gubernatorial candidate, the *“political arena of Niger State was fitting, full of despair and hopelessness. In fact, bewilderment completely surrounded the horizon. It was in the midst of this State of uncertainty that the Talban Minna staked his hard earned reputation in public and private life, to render redeeming services to Niger State. It takes a man of such status with impeccable character to save the situation from total collapse”*.

At the outset, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in Niger State was fully committed to ensuring that a leader with brightest mind of immense intelligence and vision for a great Niger State, emerged. But unfortunately, the reverse was the case under the immediate past administration. Rather than a servant-leadership which is the hope of all sane minds, elite leadership was put in place. Consequently, the party *“witnessed for a greater part of its tenure in governing Niger State, an internal inferno that consumed many*

double faceted elite leaders and corruption in its highest heights”.

Writing from the *Voice of the Electorates*, Shehu Musa Tanko captured the political criminality of the period in the following words: “The elite PDP Congress leadership selection of November/December, 2006 in Niger State succeeded only in scheming out contestants with vision, mission and massive support of the general public. That charade called primary elections in the State, ignored rules set up by the PDP National Secretariat, not to allow contestants burdened with petitions bordering on wrong doings while in public office to participate. It was speculated that the manipulated winner of that charade, Alh. Jibril Bala Gunna had contributed immensely to the mismanagement of public resources while he served as the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Local Government and chieftaincy Affairs.”

The PDP primaries had therefore, thrown up a vacuum for the seat of the flag bearer of the elections of the 2007. As destiny would have it, the stakeholders came together in Abuja and asked Dr. Babangida Aliyu to lead the State in the coming elections.

It was a decision that he pondered before he could

take, for as he had said severally, all he wanted to be was the Head of Service of the Federation, (which meant that becoming a governor was not in his purview) at then.

State-wide consultation with his family, friends and colleagues saw him picking the gauntlet and becoming the party's flag bearer. Several months of campaigning and politicking earned him the trust of the people. He won the gubernatorial election fair and square and thus the courage to serve. With the trust of Nigerlites comes the mandate to lead them to the promise land.

On May 29, 2007 when Dr. Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu, Talban Minna, took over the mantle of leadership as Governor of Niger State, virtually all the State infrastructure, vital to the socio-economic development of the State, had been left to rot.

This and other structural deficiencies, constituted the environment under which the administration of Dr. Babangida Aliyu assumed office. It was evident that the development of the physical infrastructure had to be a major priority. And for a government which is determined to make the State one of the three best economies in the country, the matter was not negotiable. Such a dream cannot be realized unless the right environment is first in placed hence the need for agenda

setting .

The Chief Servant himself had said: “It will be an understatement to say that the State is facing development challenges, not yet out of the woods, and a lot more to be done. Basic facilities like potable water and electricity supplies are still inadequate and in many cases out of the reach of our populace, our agricultural potentials remain untapped, thus leaving the majority of population, who are mainly peasant farmers, in abject poverty. This situation needs to be revised”.

Quite obvious, hope has been restored. The Augean Stable is being cleaned up, and Nigerlites now have not only a listening government but a pro-active one with a clear focus and sense of mission.

No doubt, this visible and measurable superlative performance not only adds fillip and sense of urgency to the expectations of an ideal State in construction but brings out the worst in the panic-stricken members of the ancient regime. It is only natural that his splendid performance would expose the rear side of the past regime and institute a yardstick for comparison. Comparisons are odious; so a clash of the dark forces of retrogression and those of light becomes inevitable.

Fortunately, Nigerlites have come of age. They cannot be used, abused and discarded at will. The people now know from instinct that to live in freedom and prosperity, their leader must also live in the present, be intelligent, compassionate, roundly moulded, scientific, foresighted, fair-minded, principled, courageous and people-centric.

All said, follies and foibles define human weakness, but however, Nigerlites are highly impressed with the insistence by the Chief Servant that politics must be conducted on the basis of sound principles whose ultimate objective is to do the greatest good to the greatest number.

It is quite obvious that our collective misery in the midst of plenty was essentially a leadership problem and contrivance. But here we are today, celebrating a man whose quest is to explore the mass potentials of the State for the greatness of all.

According to Ahmed Bala Onyir, the Director Training Newslines Newspaper, Minna, "MBA has not only captured the hearts and minds of the people, he has ignited a social value change by his prudent management of public finances while at the same time

executing an unprecedented broad spectrum development whose financial implication is a people's oriented.

While cheering and applauding this rare feat, some of us cannot but wonder if he is receiving the money for these development activities from the same source his predecessor got his? It is a legitimate thought because we have been used to the eight year long refrain of "no money" in an era of unprecedented inflow of huge funds and total non-performance.

It is not difficult to perceive the oozing patriotism running in the veins of the Chief Servant. Here is a man in a breathe-taking speed to make up for years of lost time and opportunities. He is an epitome of a principled, conscious and focused leader; a bundle of energy and guided missile. Not only is he well soaked in the knowledge of his environment, he certainly understands the dynamic social forces pushing, pulling and defining existence in the hilt with the requisite statecraft, political will and compassion to navigate the landmines and affect lives.

In the past two years, he has permitted himself to execute numerous actions which define, justify and

authenticate his resolve, capacity and contributions to the development of Niger State.

In fact, the Chief Servant, a true master in conducting the administration of public business, has, tipped the threatening social despondency in the State. He has broken the jinx of backward culture and underdevelopment.

Realistic Picture Of The Priceless Gem

Long before his ascension to the hallowed chambers of governance, he had added value to colour of traditional rulership and he had contributed immensely to the upgrading of educational facilities through the Minna Emirate Educational Foundation (MEEFO). Perhaps most importantly is the capacity of individuals he helped build through his philanthropic activities and the facilitating of employment opportunities for youth in Niger State.

This is a strong attestation to the view earlier held by Nigerlites that his choice engender greater benefits to the State.

And for those who had for quite a number of year followed the Chief Servant's trajectory since the days as Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of the Federal

Capital, it is easy to testify that the Chief Servant has always been a man of transparent honesty, unmistakable integrity, sincere forthrightness and disarming simplicity.

By the modesty of his lifestyle, the humility of his carriage and the dignity of his personality, he has always been and continually remains a challenge and an inspiration to many Nigerians.

As a cocksure, self-confessed democrat and patriot, who has already endorsed a highly productive economic orthodoxy and moral rearmament for the State, the end of an era of stunted growth and development well in sight.

In the words of Sunday Patrick, the Features Editor, *Newsline Newspaper*, Minna. "Talba is an epitome of service as he is of wisdom. He detests injustice and therefore, he never let go an opportunity to kick hard at unjust treatment of others. But what really marks him out is that he approximates the archetype of one found worthy in learning and in character. He is unassuming and a gentler soul. He is a lion, roaring against corruption, laziness and greed. He has been a lodestar all through his life. He is indeed a sharp contrast to the

knaves who had held the State in thrall. His call on all Nigerlites to gird their loins and prepare to move the State forward is much inspiring”.

Like great democrats, the Chief Servant strongly upholds the fixed democratic rule that power belongs to the people. He does not see power as a winner-takes-all business but the commitment to serve the people in all honesty; and that explains why he does not always call all the shots without consulting the people.

He had once said: “I should restate that we are fully committed to the principles of transparency, accountability and popular participatory democracy. We shall always endeavour to consult, discuss and interact with our people through various means on matters that will have significant impact on your lives. We have introduced a number of measures, like the People's Parliament, the Jama'a Forum, the Governor's monthly live media chat with the people, the regular media briefing after each Executive Council meeting, etc, to achieve some of these objectives...”

Interestingly, the type of power he wields and

exercises is a morally leveraged power, which of course, is not reprehensive to the people.

He detests corruption in all facets of the word, but believes strongly in instilling strong cultural values of honesty, hard work, and sacrifice.

He had once said: “the State could not attain its greatness with the high level of embezzlement, financial leakages and wastages that were the order of the day.... Whoever is in government to steal or embezzle government funds is free to leave us now...don't do wrong things and claim that the governor or your boss has directed you to do so. Verbal instructions and approvals should always be backed by confirmation of that approval in writingthe present administration is setting a standard and that it would be open to probe after its tenure”.

Right through his stint in the public service, the Chief Servant has developed the passion for excellence in service. In fact, he encourages the people to discard lackluster performance of duties in favour of a disciplined approach to duty. He believes strongly that success is earned, and therefore, we must justify our right to greatness by individually engaging in productive activity, with a scope of responsibility,

dedication and great zeal.

In the spirit of collectivism, he has discovered a passion for the resuscitation of the State, particularly giving the challenges of this knowledge driven Century.

This of course, requires fundamental changes in policies to modernize our education, economy and industry.

He is a 21st Century leader, with the capacity to rally the State in honesty, hard work and raise our imagination beyond selfish pre-occupations and greed, to move the State ahead and create the tools to make it great.

His goal has always been to help the State dream a bigger, larger and glorious dream that generations of Nigerlites will support. Also, his preference has always been to engage our brightest minds in government by evolving new approaches designed to seriously solve problems.

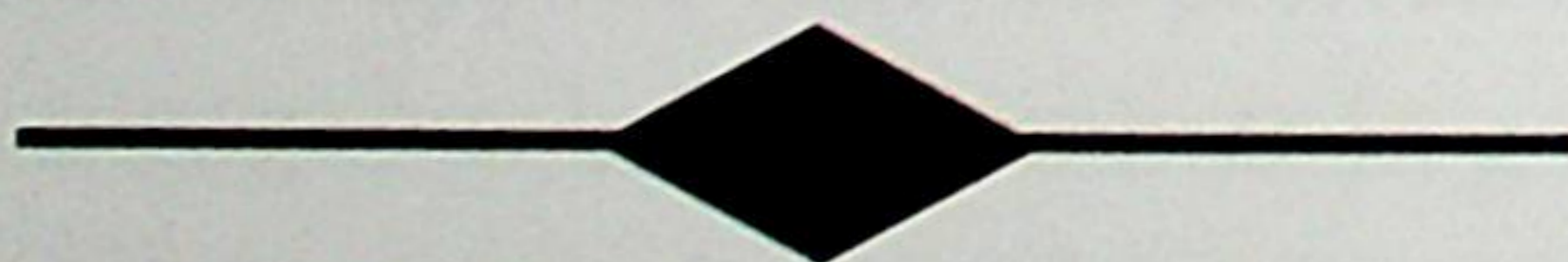
Also quoting Sunday Patrick, "Talba is heading towards creating a new Niger that is colourful, vibrant and open for change. He will certainly achieve this goal

due to the fact that he has immense intelligence, competence, and unimpeachable character. He has solid experience, and has been able to stimulate activism in the Private Sector and move the Public Sector out of its stasis”.



**Chapter
Three**

**ROUND PEGS IN ROUND
HOLES: ASSESSING THE
EXECUTIVE TEAM OF
HOPE**



The success of the process of governance all over the world has always been directly linked to the individual who are in tune with the realities of their immediate assignment, who are saddled with great ideas and invoke the attitude of affirmative action. The latter characteristic at any given time would ensure that positive results are gained in any given situation. They fit the proverbial descriptions that 'this individual knows his onions'; the administration of Dr. Babangida is fortunate to have a select team of self motivated individuals and technocrats saddled with the mandate of working day and night to achieve results in the interest of Nigerlites. This assemblage of highly talented achievers range from medical doctors, educationists, politicians, journalists, career and experienced civil servants and also those who have made their marks in private practice; the vocation and skills of his commissioners, advisers, assistants and personal aides, is a great determinant of what the portfolios they oversee, this is to ensure a greater impact and productivity.

The appearance of Dr. Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu (CON) on the political scene in Niger State was not out of sheer luck, but a conscious choice by the people who

have already known of his special characteristics of hardwork, dedication to duty, vast experience in public service, anti-corruption stance, high level of literacy, and deep knowledge of the world around him. The people of the State are not without knowledge of the man's life of social activism, intellectual enterprise and socio-political connections.

His coming to power was to effect needed change in the socio-political make up of the State. He is focused on re-packaging the political machinery of government so as to make democracy wholesomely significant to the environment, and to the people for whom it is meant. He has since set up a collection of tasks for himself, among which are the following:

- (a) making democracy appeal to the people, and to make it buoyantly promising to the people of the State;
- (b) encouraging forms of development and erection of infrastructural facilities to blend with the collective aspirations of the people;
- (c) inspiring people to have faith in government since they had lost interest in same because of the bad experiences in leadership and governance in the past;
- (d) creating room for wards development and

- gainsomely monitoring developments within the Local Government Areas;
- (e) creating a government whose philosophy is anchored on virtues of accountability, transparency, fairness and truth;
 - (f) enthroning a responsible leadership which serve to protect values and value-systems among the people, and with clear visionary agenda and unique orientations.

The scholar, administrator and dynamic servant-leader is propelled by the need to entrench full democracy of which General Ibrahim Babangida once said "requires an uncommonly high level of sophistication of society, personnel and behaviours in order for it to be sustained and maintained". He has insisted on the promotion of a system free from poverty, bitterness, ethnic chauvinism, vanity, rivalry and "dangerous impulses" (to paraphrase Areoye Oyebola). He has sought to establish a system which is a solution, permanent as it were, to problems of water, electricity, flood, irrigation, marketing system, roads, and bridges, transport, literacy, employment, security and infrastructures, because these problems were never effectively tackled by the previous regime. He has sought an end to a regime of corruption,

inefficiency, political blackmail, sectionalism, absenteeism, exploitation, youth restfulness, political mercantilism, violence, indiscipline, embezzlement and greed.

Political Leadership: The Instance Of Local Government Area Bosses

While the Niger State government under the leadership of Dr, Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu has a very well-sketched out programmes and focus for the Local Government Administration, it has since endeavoured to elect people with deep respect for transparency, truth and fairness as chairmen of Local Government Councils.

The Principal Officers of these Local Government Councils have proved over the years to be disciplined, focused, sincere and dedicated. These officers with good background in public service and who have proved to be deeply patriotic have been appointed to man these Councils, and proudly put in place programmes and projects which manifest people's deep-needed needs and expectations.

As political leaders, these officers are made to understand the policy thrust of the administration, and its deep commitment to the overall growth of the State. They are fully aware of the need to battle hunger and

lack of water as well as put in place health conditions of the people. Community projects are very much needed in every segment of the society, and these officers have never shied away from pursuing same.

They are dedicated and dynamic in spirit and performance, and are quite sensitive to the focus and enthusiasm of the administration. Since the governor has pledged to be a Chief Servant, the Local Government bosses have proved to be active servants of the people, through whom dividends of democracy are positively achieved.

They are also hardworking, and proud to be given the assignment to perform the transformation of their communities. They are, of course, familiar with the aspirations of their people, and their development projects in places have been visible. They are also in the forefront of the battle against corruption, nepotism and ethnicity. And of course, together with the Chief Servant, they seek to make the State one of the best three States in Nigeria in the year 2020. These Local government bosses are credible politicians and bureaucrats who know what it takes to make government succeed:

- (a) implement and execute policies and decisions of government;
- (b) assist policy makers by gathering and supplying

- facts and information to government; and
- (c) Serve as instruments of governmental continuity. They are understandably objective, factual and accurate. Equally, they serve to project the value system of society, which in the words of Tunga Wawa (1999:71) “determines the direction of that particular society in terms of its outlook and trend of development”. After all, progress and development in the local government system will depend largely on the development of the local communities and involving the people in policy formulation and decision making on issues affecting them (T/Wawa, p. 35).

We have used the example of the Local Government system under Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu to illustrate why he has to work with a team of people who really understand the needs of the society, and aspirations of the people. Such people are expected to understand his vision and mission in government; agree with the spirit of transforming the society; and perform to expectation without corrupting themselves and the system.

One truth is that Talban Minna never attracted people to his government solely because they are members of his party, the Peoples Democratic Party

(PDP). His appointments so far cut across party lines, while there are those not even identified with any known political party. These are “servant-appointees” from the academics, private service and business and industrial world. What matters to him are those who would keenly preserve the vision and integrity of the administration; protect the sanctity of its values, and project a good image of its commitments to the outside world. Such people should be men and women of integrity, hard work, passion for achievements, and outstanding moral and ethical virtues. In the booklet titled “NIGER STATE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL PROFILE,” the Secretary to the State Government, Dr. Muhammad K. Yahaya wrote in part: “The cabinet team of the Chief Servant can be confidently described as a dream team comprising of youthful, tested and experienced technocrat. The Executive Council is piloted and coordinated by the Office of Secretary to the Government and Cabinet Secretariat”.

Those appointed to help deliver on the mandate of the Chief Servant are individuals whose skills and strengths have prepared them for the challenges of their various Ministries, Departments and Units include:-

Alhaji (Dr) Ahmed Musa Ibeto (FDR, SHIMN).

One figure whose image has been of immense worth in a discussion on the political direction in Niger State is the Deputy Chief Servant, Alhaji (Dr) Ahmed Musa Ibeto (FDR, SHIMN). This amiable, hardworking and profoundly committed visionary had pursued a degree in History from the Usumanu Dan Fodio University, Sokoto (1980- 1985). He had been a teacher and a profound politician and administrator. He was Chairman, Magama LGA (1987 - 1989); State Chairman of Republican Party (NRC) in 1999; State Secretary of the defunct United Nigerian Centre Party (UNCP) and All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP). Between 1999 and 2003, he was Special Assistant on Protocol matters to the immediate past governor. In 2003, he contested and won election into the Federal House of Representative (PDP) and served as the Deputy Chairman, House Committee on Power and later Chairman, House Committee on States and Local Governments. An award winning administrator, he was awarded a Doctorate degree (Honoris causa) in Administration by California University (USA) in conjunction with Institute of Journalism, Enugu (2003). He had traveled to many countries like Europe

and Asia. A visionary, amiable and dynamic leader, he has been on the right side of the Chief Servant and is also the Commissioner for Water Resources.

No matter how impressively visionary or charismatic a leader is, he needs the cooperation and integrative participation of a crop of seasoned, committed and respected people to properly situate his vision and mission in society. Democracy is demanding, always expansive and totally engulfing. A leader who thinks he alone can do every service on behalf of the people will not only fail, he will become a laughing stock before the very people he is supposed to serve. Bill Newman in his *10 Laws of Leadership* wrote that "Wisdom is the ability to apply knowledge and experience to any given situation". To appoint people that are competent and suitable enough to advance one's dream is part of wisdom. A leader should have wisdom and discipline, because continual success cannot be achieved without discipline Newman has added. Every leader needs good advisers and aides; people not propelled by selfish reasons or egotistic concerns. It is people that will be needed to man the ministries and parastatals; the LGAs and business negotiations, and then the supervision of key projects in places. Such people are expected to be

forth- right, positive minded, sincere, focused and always act in public interest. This is Talba's unique luck, and why servant leadership has been smooth for him.

Dr. Muhammad K. Yahaya.

One of the key officers of the government is the Secretary to the State Government (SSG) himself. Born on 20th October, 1962, in Kuchi Ward of Jima District of Lavun LGA, attended elementary and Government Teachers' College Wushishi (1975- 1980) and later the College of Education, Minna (1981- 1984). His varsity education was at the University of Calabar (1989- 1991) where he obtained a degree in Agricultural Science Education and the University of Ibadan an M. Sc (1992) and Ph.D. (1995) in Agricultural Extension. He had been a lecturer at the University of Ibadan, and extensively researching on Development Communication, mobilization for social change, Design and Implementation of Communication strategies. Author of four books in Communication for Social Engineering and Entertainment Education, he is a CODESRIA Laureate, Salzburg Seminar Fellow and recipient of several honours and awards as well as a member of several professional associations such as Association for Communication Excellence in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Life and Human

Science (ACE), Florida, USA; African Council for Communication Education (ACCE); Agricultural Extension Society of Nigeria (AESON) and Nigeria Rural Sociology Association (NRSA).

He was involved in the establishment of the Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai as a member of Evaluation and Implementation Committee (2004-2007) and also as member of the Governing Council. He has worked with many national and international agencies, and established the Centre for Communication and Reproductive Health Services (CCRHS) in Bida since 1998. He was made the Wazirin Jema'a Doko, Dan-Masinin Kuchi and Magatakarda of Nupe Kingdom. The well travelled man (and not a politician) occupies the position of Secretary to the State Government.

There are other non-politicians, like the SSG, who have been in the cabinet and doing well in different capacities.

Alhaji Abdullahi Umar Danyaya (Head of Service), holds a M. Sc. Degree in Agricultural Economics from ABU, Zaria, Certificate in Agriculture and Rural Project Management (1981); Certificate in

Advanced Leadership and management (1992), was a classroom teacher (1973-1977) Civil Servant, and later rose to the position of a Permanent Secretary. A member of the Farm Management Association of Nigeria, he has remained an outstanding public servant.

Dr. Peter Sale Sarki, (former Chief of Staff and now Honourable Commissioner for Higher Education), is a good example. A Ph.D. holder in Educational Planning (1991) from the University of Benin, he had been a tutor, lecturer (1976 - 2006) and a resource person at several workshops, Conferences and Seminars. A sound professional and respected doyen of academic excellence, he was the mayor of Minna Municipal Council (1984- 1988); Chairman, Niger State Essential Commodity Board (1985-1987); State Coordinator of Political Education (1988- 1989); member, National Library Board; Sole Administrator, Bosso Local Government Council (1991) and of Paikoro Local Government Council (1998- 1999); member, National Commission for Colleges of Education (1994-2006). He received the Good Ambassador Award in 1998.

Alhaji Garba Isah Abara, (former Commissioner for Water Resources and Rural Development) had been a teacher, Chief Education Officer (1986), Education Secretary, Rijau LEA (1994) and Rafi LEA (1997). He had retired in 1998.

Mrs. Suzan Adishetu Gana (former Commissioner for Science and Technology) and that of environment has also been a teacher, Vice-Principal in different schools and later Principal.

Alhaji Ahmed Adamu Kagara, (Turakin Kagara), Commissioner for Information, Communications and Culture) obtained a Masters Degree in Public Administration in 1988 from the Liverpool University, United Kingdom. He was an Administrative Officer; Secretary, Health Services Management Board (1985); Assistant Director, National Electoral Commission (1989) and a substantive Director (1996); and had monitored Elections in Mexico, Ghana, Palestine and United Kingdom. He had been the Commissioner of Agriculture (2007 and 2008).

Mrs. Lami Elizabeth Makama (Commissioner for Women Affairs and Social Development) has been an educationist and was Vice-Principal and Principal

of different schools and served as a resource person at seminars and workshops. She had been a member of the Women's Right Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA) and of the Central Working Committee of the Minna Emirate Education Foundation (MEEFO) and State Secretary, Better Life for African Women (2004 - 2007). But she has always shown interest in politics, and had even been a Senior Special Assistant.

Mrs. Salome Fatima Nnawo Ndakotsu, (Commissioner for Land and Housing) is another woman in the cabinet. A Master degree holder, she had been a member elect in the Niger State House of Assembly (1997), and had been the State Treasurer of the PDP (1998-2000). She was Chairperson, Niger State Sports Control Board, Minna (2002-2003); Chairperson Niger State Agricultural Development Board (2003); Board member, National Institute for sports, Lagos (2001 - 2004) and she had been Caretaker Committee Chairperson, Kintako LGA (2007).

Hajiya Asmau Yusuf Usman, (Hon. Commissioner for Basic Education), is an educationist of high repute and a moral instructor. A graduate of Education (in Home Economics), she had been a

teacher, Principal (1980 -1982). Inspector Women Education, Zonal Office, Suleja (185-1986) and Deputy Director, Schools and Higher Education, Federal Capital Territory. In 2004, She became Director/Chairman, FCT Secondary Education Board, this woman who had traveled to Ghana, Scotland, Kenya, South Africa, Santiago, USA and Saudi Arabia, is indeed a moral example and role model.

Engr. Sani Mohammed Ndanusa (FNSE) used to be the Commissioner for Transport and later, for Works and Infrastructural Development. But today, he is presently Hon. Minister for Sports and Chairman, Nigeria Sports Federation. He holds a Masters Degree in Water and Waste Water Engineering (1987). He had been into private practice, going into partnership with other professional engineers and established a consulting engineering firm. He had been General Manager, Niger State Water Board, and later Permanent Secretary, Water Board. He had been deeply involved in Sports, NACCIMA and has received a number of awards for his dexterity and competence.

Dr. Isah Yahaya Vatsa ,(Commissioner for Health), acquired his MBBS in 1989 from the Ahmadu

Bello University, Zaria; and had served with the Federal Capital Development Authority (FCDA); Wuse General Hospital, Abuja (1991-1993); Constitutional Conference and later Gwarinpa General Hospital (1994-1999). He later acquired Masters of Public Health (MPH) and had attended many national and international Seminars. He is a registered member of the Nigeria Medical Association (NMA) and Islamic Medical Association of Nigeria (IMAN) and has authored two books: *Socio-Economic factors Affecting Uptake of Routine Immunization in Tudun Wada, Minna, Niger State (1989)* and *Public Health Implications of HIV/AIDS in Antenatal Women in Abuja, Nigeria (2000)*. This award-winning medical expert has carted home Ambassador for Peace by the Inter-religions and International Federation for World Peace and General Mobilization by the Society for Community Development.

Alhaji Yusuf Mohammed Gunu, (Hon. Commissioner for Science and Technology), was born on 30th March 1962 at Bussa, Borgu LGA of Niger State. He attended Botonu Baptist Grammar School, Okuta (1973-1978); School of Health Technology, Sokoto (1980-1982); Kaduna Polytechnic (1987-1989); and



THE CHIEF SERVANT
DR. MU'AZU BABANGIDA ALIYU OON
Talban Minna
Executive Governor, Niger State



**THE DEPUTY CHIEF SERVANT
HON. AHMED MUSA IBETO**
Santurakin Kontagora
Deputy Governor, Niger State



ALH. ABDULLAHI UMAR DANYAYA
Head of Service, Niger State



DR. MUHAMMAD KUTA YAHYA
Secretary to Niger State Government



ALH. YUSUF MOHAMMED GUNU
Hon. Commissioner for Science
& Technology



MRS SUSAN ADISHETU GANA
Hon. Commissioner for Environment



ALH. AHMED ADAMU KAGARA MBL, FCA
Hon. Commissioner for Information & Comm



MRS SALOME FATIMA NDAKOTSU
Hon. Commissioner for Land & Housing



ALH. ABUBAKAR MOHAMMED GARBA
Hon. Commissioner for Sports
& Youth Devt



ALH. GARBA JIBRIN DAWANKE
Hon. Commissioner for Agriculture
& Rural Devt



ENGR SANI M. NDANUSA FNSE
Former Commissioner for Works & Infrastructural Devt.



ALH. ADAMU USMAN ESQ
Hon. Commissioner for Justice



ALH. UMAR MOHAMMED NASKO
Hon. Commissioner for Tourism & Culture



MRS LAMI E. MAKAMA
Hon. Commissioner for Women Affairs & Soc. Devt



MR. PETER SANI SALE
Hon. Commissioner for
Higher Education



ALH. GARBA ISAH ABARAH
Hon. Commissioner for
Livestock & Fisheries



ALH. HASSAN L. ABDULLAHI
Hon. Commissioner for Commerce,
Inv. & Co-op



BARR. ABDULLAHI BAWA
Hon. Commissioner for Local
Govt & Chieftaincy Affairs



DR. ISAH YAHAYA VATSA
Hon. Commissioner for Health



HAJIYA ASMA'U YUSUF USMAN
Hon. Commissioner for Basic Education



ALH. AMINU YUSUF
Hon. Commissioner for Finance
and Economic Planning

the Kebbi State Polytechnic, Birnin Kebbi(1997-1998).

By the year 2000, he had obtained a post Graduate Diploma and Masters Degree in Public Administration from the University of Calabar.

After his NYSC (1989-1990), he worked as a Senior Nutrition Officer, Catering Services in charge of Pediatric. He was also Social Mobilization Consultant of UNICEF in Sokoto State; a member of Nutrition Society of Nigeria; Nigeria Diabetic Association; Medical and Health Workers Union; Women and Children Friendly Health Services Committee(North West Zone) and Councilor, Nutrition Society of Nigeria. The Magajin Rafin Borgu had been Commissioner of Information(2007-2008) and Commissioner of Agriculture.

Alhaji Aminu Yusuf Paiko is the Commissioner of Finance, Budget and Economic Planning. Born on 2nd September, 1959, he attended Central Primary School, Minna (1965-1971); Government Secondary School, Kagara(1972-1976) and the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria for his B.Sc Economics (1977-1980) and MSC, Development Economics From the University of Jos (1984).

He worked previously with the Ministry of Economic Planning, Niger State (1981-1985); the NAL Merchant Bank (1985-1992), and was Managing Director of Niger State Trust Fund (1992-1996).

He was also at the United Bank for Africa Plc (1996-2001); First Bank of Nigeria Plc; and Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). A member of the Certified Pension Institute of Nigeria (CPIN). Alhaji Aminu loves reading, sporting and travelling.

Alhaji Adamu Usman, Esq is the Honourable Commissioner for Justice. Born on 6th August 1960 in Lemafu, Jebba North in Niger State, he attended LEA Primary School, Jebba North (1966-1972); Ahmadu Bahago Teachers' College, Minna (1975-1980); and Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (1981-1985) for his degree in Law. He attended the Nigerian Law School, Lagos (1985-86). He had served with C.J. Asiegbu and Co; Alpha Chambers (now Ibrahim Isiyaku SAN and Co); and was State Counsel with Niger State Ministry of Justice (1989-1990). He was Principal Partner at Amana Chambers, Minna, and in 1997, he was elected into the Niger State House of Assembly.

This award winning advocate was Chairman,

Nigerian Bar Association (Minna branch); member, Working Group Committee on the Formulation and Articulation of the Nigeria Bar Association's position on the Constitutional Legal Judicial Reforms submitted to the National Political Conference (2005), He was Secretary to some reputable companies and government institutions like Maizube Holdings/Farms, Minna; Bakai Helvetica Pharmaceutical Ltd, Minna; and Niger State Hospitals Management Board, Minna.

Alhaji Umar Mohammed Nasko (FCIDA), (The Yeriman Nasko and Jarman Kontagora), was born on the 13th March 1975. He attended Command Children's School, Army Barracks, Yaba, Lagos (1980-1985); Nigeria Military School, Zaria (1985-1990), and the University of Abuja for his Certificate in Computer Studies. Though he enrolled in the Federal University of Technology (FUT) Minna for remedial studies, he transferred later to the Lodz University, Poland where he obtained a certificate in Polish and later obtained the certificate of participation in the 2nd Presidential Strategic Leadership and Governance Retreat (University of Warwick, UK in 2007). He was awarded Honorary Doctorate degree in Public Administration

from the Atlantic International University, Okija, Anambra State.

He had served at the Presidential Villa, Aso Rock Abuja in the 311 Air Defense Artillery Detachments (1990); United Nations Human Rights Office, Krakow, Poland (1999-2001); He was Assistant Secretary, Senate Committee on Drugs, Narcotics and Financial Crimes (2001-2002); Project Manager, Pathbro Ventures Nigeria Ltd, Abuja; and Managing Director, Madae and Sons Ltd, Nasko.

He had equally served in the Niger State Transition Committee; Niger State Government Committee on Public Private Partnership (PPP). He was Chairman, Vehicle Verification Committee, Office of the Secretary to the State Government (SSG); and member, Technical Committee on Harmonization of Niger State Action Plans (2007).

He is a member of the Nigerian Institute of Registered Administrative Managers of Nigeria and Fellow, Certified Institute of Public Administrators of Ghana. He had received a number of awards: Development Merit Award of Excellence by *Time News Magazine* (2007) and the Africa Success

Award in Commerce, Industry, Tourism and Cooperatives by Africa Success Limited (2007). The Hon. Commissioner for Culture and Tourism loves hunting and playing lawn tennis.

Alhaji Abubakar Garba Mohammed is the Hon. Commissioner for Youths and Sports. He was born on the 1st November, 1972 in Suleja; he schooled at Anguwan Waje Primary School, Suleja (1977 - 1982); Government Secondary School, Suleja (1983-1988) and College of Advanced Studies, Zungeru, Niger State (1988-1990).

He had worked as Personnel Assistant, Education Department in Federal Capital Development Authority, Abuja (1991-1998) and later attended the Usuman Dan Fodio University, Sokoto (1992-1995) for his BA degree in Islamic Studies. The NYSC programme followed in 1995-1996

He was elected Councillor of his ward in Suleja LGA (1999-2001) and served as Government Caretaker Chairman, Abukwaka Local Government Area. He later obtained a Post Graduate Diploma in Business Administration from the University of Abuja (2001), and M. Sc in Business Administration also

from Abuja in 2006. Between 2003 and 2007, he served as Council Secretary, Abukwaka LGA.

His hobbies include soccer, reading and visiting friends.

Barr. Abdullahi Bawa Wuse is the Hon. Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs. He was born in July 1967 in Tafa LGA. He attended Unguwan Waje Primary School, Suleja and the Federal Government College, Minna. In 1990, he obtained a degree in Law from the Bayero University, Kano, and was called to the Bar in 1991. From the University of Jos, he later obtained a Master's degree in Law.

He was S.O. III Prosecution of Legal Department, 82 Division, Nigeria Army, Enugu; and between 1992 and 1997, he was Associate Partner, Nasiha Chambers, Suleja. Between 1993 and 2002, he lectured at the faculty of Law, University of Abuja, and was a Principal Partner, Merit Chambers, Suleja.

In 2003, he was appointed Transition Committee Chairman, Tafa LGA, New Wuse, where he later contested as Executive Chairman.

Alhaji Hassan Lawal Abdullahi, is the Hon. Commissioner of Investment, Commerce and Cooperatives. He was born on 10th August 1970. He attended Zarumai Primary School, Minna (1976-1981), Federal Government College, Maiduguri Borno State (1983-1988), Federal Polytechnic Bida and Kaduna Polytechnic (1989-1996) for his National (ND) and Higher National Diploma (HND) respectively. He also obtained his Post Graduate Diploma (PGD) in Purchasing and Supply from Kaduna Polytechnic in 1999. He is presently undergoing his Masters Degree Programme in Public Administration with University of Abuja.

He worked previously as a Principal Legislative Aide with the National Assembly, Abuja and also served as Senior Special Assistant on Investment to the Niger State Governor between July 2008 and June 2009. He is an Associate Member of Nigeria Institute of Management Studies (AMNIM).

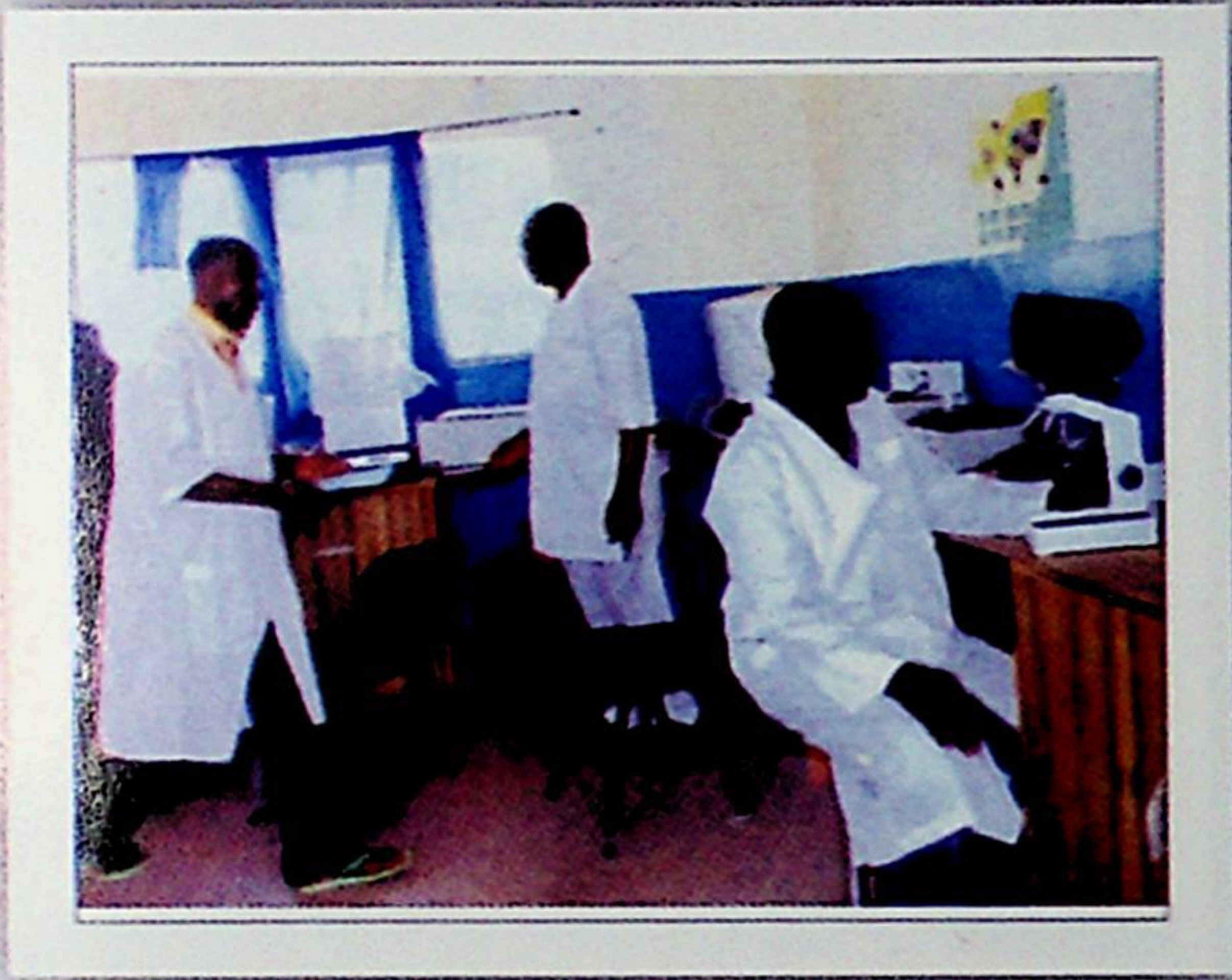
He had headed and served in many committees and was bestowed with Role Model Award by the Rotary Club International District 9130 Nigeria (in recognition of Selfless Service to Humanity and Community Development).

Alhaji Jibrin Garba Danwake, (Hon. Commissioner of Agriculture and Rural Development), was born September 5, 1961 in the Mariga Local Government of Niger State. He had his primary education between 1969- 1975 and secondary education in Government Secondary School, Kagara between 1975- 1980. He holds a National Certificate in Education (NCE) from College of Education, Minna, a B.Sc (Hons) Degree in Agriculture from Usmanu Danfodio University, Sokoto and M.Tech. in Animal Production from Federal University of Technology, Minna.

He is an expert in the field of Agriculture and an experienced teacher with many journals in agriculture to his credit.

Conclusion

There are interesting features of the executive body of the Talba's government. One of these is that women have not been neglected like in previous times. Women, being mothers of the nation, have been appointed to man different posts from where they have utilized their experience, resourcefulness, wisdom and social integrations to contribute significantly to the development of society.



Lab scientists at work in a Lab



Routine free medical treatment for pregnant women



Modern Health facilities procured for effective health delivery



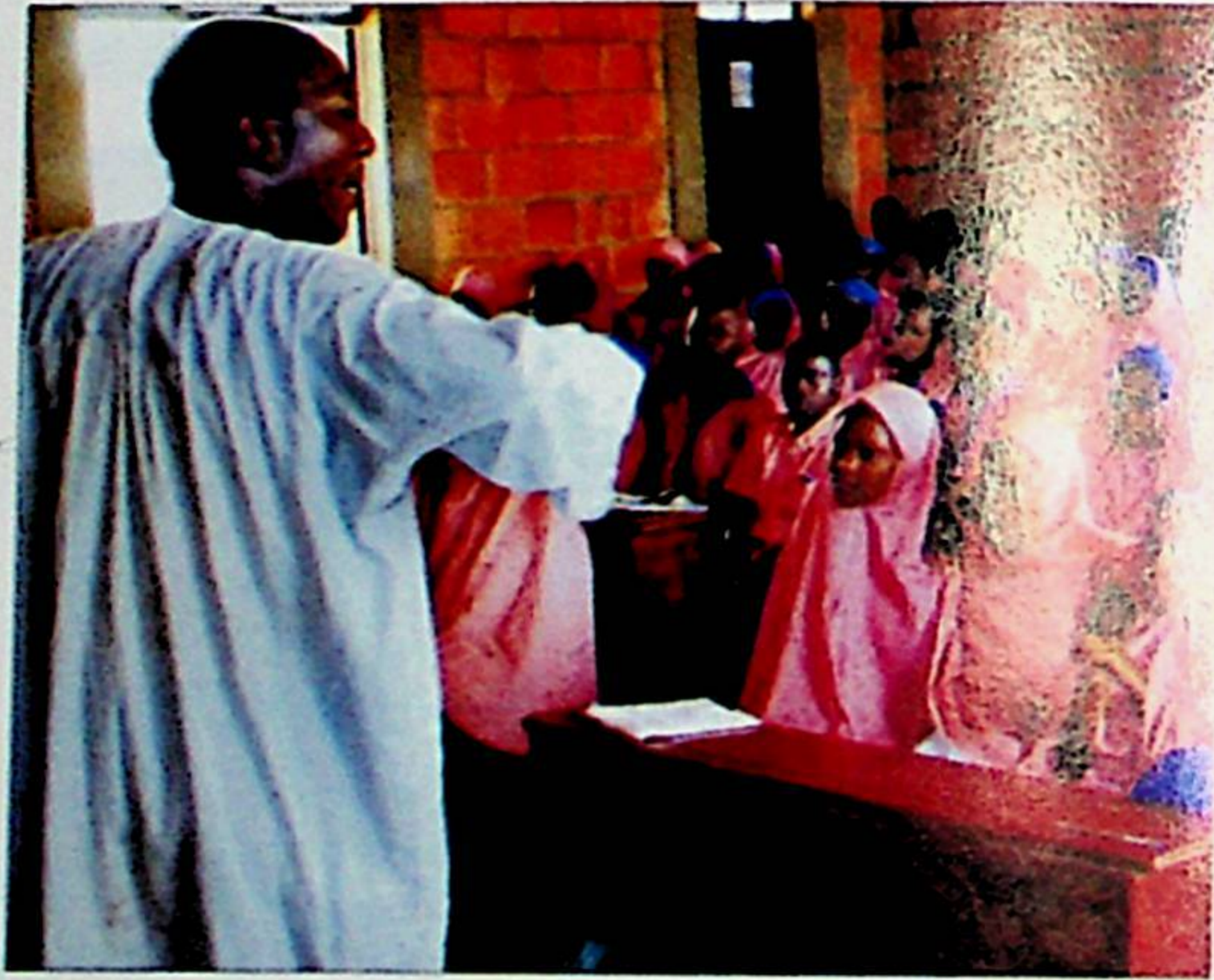
Rehabilitated rural health centre



Beneficiary of Life Rehab



Modern Tractors to boost food production



Students receiving lesson from their teacher



Renovation of One Block of 2 Classrooms & Office at Busu in Busu Ward

Moreover, while some of the people appointed have always been politicians, quite a number of the present and past appointees have not been politicians but tested and trusted Nigerlites, who have been known with virtues of hardwork, enterprise, honour, wisdom, tact, self-discipline and commitments. In their various professions and community services, they have been essentially virtuous and determined to succeed. They are people with focus, and their individual skills and reasoning power remain undoubted. Moreover, at different times, they have been known to have contributed to the growth of society, monitoring elections, serving as resources personnel at symposia and seminars or helping the youth to grow. The educationists amongst them, for instance, have been known to have discovered many hidden talents in society and most of their past products are to be found in various positions in society.

Again, since their appointments, they have not been seen to be inefficient, cowardly, or corrupt, and their performances have been satisfactory to all and sundry. Active, punctual, sensitive, available and reachable, they are people who are determined to make the vision of the Chief Servant poignantly

achievable and truly people oriented. These lieutenants have perpetually proved to be loyal and faithfully to the progressive government of Talban Minna; they have allowed transparency and accountability to be watchwords in their day-to-day performance; they do not seek cheap popularity all over the place, and they are charismatic, hardworking, and industrious and are given to soundness of mission and integrity.

The women have not allowed male chauvinism to cripple their spirit of dedication; and the political party executives have not allowed concern for their parties to swallow the dream of developing the society. Indeed, the Chief Servant is fortunate to have a select team of self-motivated individuals and technocrats saddled with the mandate of working day and night to achieve results in the interests of Nigerlites. This assemblage of highly talented achievers range from medical doctors, educationists, politicians, journalists, career and experienced civil servants and also those who have made their marks in private practice; the vocation and skills of his Commissioners, Advisers, Assistants and Personal aides, is a great determinant of what the portfolios they oversee. This is to ensure a greater impact and productivity.



Chapter Four

VISION 3:2020: ERADICATING POVERTY AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT



The Vision 3:2020 otherwise branded as the triple T Vision is the nucleus of government's intervention in the sectoral development of the State and from it, the mission also evolved.

The Vision

To transform Niger State into one of the top three State economies in Nigeria by the year 2020 by being a model and leader in agro-based industrialization, where there are employment and wealth creation opportunities for all in an atmosphere of peace

The Mission

To improve Nigerlites by providing a conducive environment for living, through wealth and employment creation opportunities in collaboration with development and public private partnership.

Imperative Of A Vision In A Development Agenda

Visions are the mental pictures of what one aims at achieving within a defined time frame. Put differently, and perhaps to help us navigate the right course, visions are aspects of strategic planning ostensibly aimed at transforming the society. And depending on the depth of visioning, a strategic plan could either be short term, medium term or long term.

From MBA's perspective, a vision is a dream or an aspiration, which propels or motivates or provides a roadmap to development. His words: "Shared vision or dream is an excellent motivator or galvanizer and an accelerator of the people's energy towards particular objectives".

With sound vision therefore, a comprehensive perspective of development which requires growth and structural change, some measure of distributive equity, an improvement in health and education so that the population growth stabilizes and an increase in urban and rural living, and employment, ensured can be well crafted. In fact, developments always involve change that affects various facets of life, including economic, social and political arenas in a way that leads to better quality of life for the citizens. A development agenda is therefore, 'aided' by concrete visioning.

But Umar Saba Dada would not totally subscribe to this view, which looks seemingly sweeping. He opines that: "Dreams, however, tall, are realizable but not without commitment, dedication and tenacity of heart, mind, strength and above all, sincerity of purpose.

These are vital ingredients for success at every level of human endeavour”.

Explaining The Vision And Mission Of The Chief Servant

The vision and mission of the Chief Servant for a new Niger State are stated in the introduction of this Chapter. They are aimed at propelling the transformation of Niger State into one of the three best developed States in Nigeria by the year 2020, and make it a model and a leader in agrobased industrialization where there are employment and wealth creation opportunities for all in an atmosphere of peace.

The Chief Servant has often reiterated that the government would leave no stone unturned in utilizing every opportunity to collectively work towards achieving its aspirations. His words: *“We were prepared and determined to provide transparent and accountable leadership by example for the unity and progress of the State; to reconcile, integrate and harness the human and material resources of Niger State; to provide the enabling environment for individual; humanitarian development and actualization; to defend and protect the integrity of*

every citizen of the State; and to uplift their hopes and aspirations too.

“Therefore, we carried out a reality check on our situation and reached a consensus on the need for us to articulate our development blueprint for Niger State. We recognized the need for the reinvigoration and revitalization of the following key sectors of our economy: Education, Health, Agriculture and Infrastructural Development, as well as the re-branding of Tourism as a key Sector that will put the State on the world map, among other ...we intend to set the minimum standards that each sector must attain in the implementation of Government's policies and programmes in such ways that would keep us focused on the goal of being among the three most developed States in Nigeria by the year 2020. We intend to put in place solid structures that would enhance the realization of our dreams and that would make it criminal for any sane person to jettison the enormous investments we would have committed towards putting our State on the world map and on the path of attaining the vision/mission...”

Albeit two years in the life of an administration may be too short to make thorough assessment of its

performance, there are however, concrete facts on ground to suggest that the Talba's administration is gradually translating the vision/mission of the State into reality.

In the education Sector, many schools have been rehabilitated, particularly in partnership with the Local Government Councils and the Private Educational Foundations. The higher institutions have also been reformed. The Chief Servant puts this succinctly: *"...we are reforming and redesigning the School systems to suite our peculiar needs hence Teachers Training Colleges are being re-introduced across the State, and those who finished secondary schools can go to teachers College for 2 years so that they can teach before going for their NCE; Schools of Preliminary Studies are being established in Ibeto, Tegna and New Bussa; satellite and extension campuses are to be established for IBB University, Lapai, to enable the institution serve the needs of the people of Niger State. We have directed and ensured that our higher institutions in the State engage only in training and academic activities for which they have been established.*

"...We noticed that at a time the College of

Education was directed to source for its running cost so it left its primary focus of producing NCE teachers and got enmeshed in production of Diploma Programmes to raise the funds, while Niger State Polytechnic was completely abandoned and neglected. Indeed, Science and Technical Education were neglected to the back burners, causing all the six technical schools to lose accreditation. We therefore, transferred Science and Technical Schools, to the Ministry of Science and Technology in order to give them the attention they required.”

It was also in the spirit of transforming the sector that the Chief Servant introduced free education in public schools, from primary to secondary levels. This has no doubt engendered parents to send their children to schools, since they can now access to Universal Basic Education.

In order to assist parents, particularly, those who are burdened by the lack of funds, the State Government has been paying WAEC and NECO fees for secondary school students, both indigenes and non-indigenes. There are also plans to introduce scholarship loan system and reform the current bursary system. The Chief Servant had put this aptly

"...we are looking at the possibility of the scholarship loan system where our students in the tertiary institutions could draw from some agreed amount of money from the banks for the duration of their course to be paid after the graduation. We have already set up a mechanism where we guarantee full employment for our graduates of Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education, we will employ them, give them six months training; the first three months, will be computer literacy. The current bursary allowances are not enough and indeed unsatisfactory. We must reform it. The new idea is to negotiate with the banks and ask each student to get loan from the bank in agreement, we know the basic idea is to get you job with loan; after the job you are already disciplined now because you have managed money. Scholarship will then be based on merit or giving to disabled persons".

He had also said: *"...we are liaising with the authorities of the higher institutions of learning in Nigeria to monitor the progress of our students in order to harvest and harness the potentials of those who have the capacity to take our State to its dream land and to participate in the realization of our*

vision/mission. By encouraging the serious ones, it is the responsibility of the parents to also monitor the performance of their children as we have during our days.

There is certainly no doubt that this sector is of prime focus in Niger State's Vision 3:2020. And the mere fact that the sector has a revered place in virtually all international and local initiatives confirms its relevance to the overall development of the human race.

The Chief Servant himself is fully aware that the growth of the sector is a major indicator of any society's preparedness to realize its development goals since educating the youths is a sure path to progress in all sectors. It is therefore, paramount to any society which wants enlightened opinions on issues of development.

Agriculture is also another vital sector that has been accorded greater attention. It (agriculture) is the mainstay of the economy of most states of the Federation, including Niger State which has the potentials of becoming the food basket of the nation.

It is therefore, being revitalized by the Chief Servant as a key sector that will put the State on the

right path of being the three developed States in Nigeria by the year 2020.

The Chief Servant had also revealed his plans and steps so far taken to revamp the Sector.

“...we are harnessing our potentials in becoming the rice and groundnut production hub in Nigeria. The State is tagged one of the largest producers of rice. We have planned massive investments, in collaboration with the private sector in the agricultural sector over the next four years, in the first instance. We shall open up vast farmlands and provide subsidies and micro credit facilities to get our able-bodied men and women back to the land. We need to make people understand that white collar job does not necessarily make people rich; that the richest people in the developed societies are actually the farmers. Our farmers would be assisted with subsidized fertilizers and other farming implements as when needed. We shall also encourage and assist them in dry season farming through the revitalization of our irrigation systems. We are willing to accept assistance from any quarters so long as our farmers would become wealthier and shall increase our production quota. We implore farmers to get involved

in farming so that a family of 12 owns at least 20 hectares of land to farm. We have set up committee in that regard, to ensure people are engaged in farming; we will also encourage irrigation farming; imagine us having 3 dams or rivers but without doing all-round farming; we will seriously pay attention to our environment. We shall endeavour to make it unprofitable for those who cut down our trees without replacement and very punitive for those who burn our bush. Bush burning does not only destroy the land but deprives our animals of the necessary nutrients...”

The Chief Servant has brought investors from Korea and had liaised with the Federal Government towards boosting agriculture in the State. Presently, investors have taken over the Badegi Rice Mill and it has concluded arrangement to commence production.

The Health Sector has also been accorded priority attention. For, according to the Chief Servant, “...it is only a healthy citizenry that can engage in any productive activity”. Consequently, the government has rehabilitated and equipped all existing General Hospitals and Health Centres across the State. Three new General Hospitals have been built at Gulu, in Lapai Local Government Areas; Wuse, in Tafa Local

Government Area; and Nasko in Magana Local Government Area. The Hospital at Agaie has been upgraded. Plans are also in the pipeline to build three additional hospitals in different local governments across the State. The issue of mass exodus of doctors and other health professionals to other States and outside the country has also been received. Already, the government has begun the review of the incentives of all healthcare providers and health professionals in the State. And interestingly, the government has been providing free medical care to children less than five years of age and free maternity care for women up to 40 days post-delivery to enhance the realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Niger State.

Similarly, the government has been providing free medical care for the elderly from 70 years and above; sickle cell patients are receiving 50 per cent subsidy on their medical treatment; and free medical treatment for HIV/AIDS patients.

The government has also organized "special intervention programmes in collaboration with international NGOs for the treatment and management of some ailments like Cancer, Goiter, Cataract eye operations, etc for the underprivileged

groups...”

Developing State infrastructure is perhaps very crucial towards the realization of the Vision/Mission of the State. In fact, the Chief Servant is quite aware of the fact that if the State is to develop and the citizens are to reap the benefits of democracy, the governments at all levels need to brace up to meet the expectations of the people through the provisions of infrastructure, including good roads, water, health facilities, etc. And for this to be done there is the need for the governments to allocate more funds for capital expenditure rather than on recurrent expenditure.

Already the Chief Servant has rehabilitated many collapsed infrastructures in the State and in some cases provided new ones.

The Chief Servant expressed his commitment to face this daunting challenge:

“...we feel we should try the best by constructing our bridge by next year. There is a bridge that eases traveling from Kontagora to Rijau; we will construct it and it will cost N30million; and also we shall look into the Nupeko bridge...Dilapidated inter and intra city roads, inadequate water supply, lack of modern

edifices to beautify our cities, etc, are some of the challenges we face here. It is rather unfortunate that even people who live by River Niger lack good drinking water; not to mention those who live by hydro-electric dams without electricity. All these are not justifiable, and something must be done in that regard...The works on Minna Township roads have since commenced, after which the other local government areas like Agaie, Bida, Kontagora and Rijau will follow”.

The government has also given tourism the deserved attention. It has embarked on harnessing the abundant tourism potentials in the State to make it a tourist haven in Nigeria. The State government had therefore, through the PPP, commenced the development of the Gurara Water Falls and all other tourist sites in the State to meet international standards, and to become a major revenue earner for the State.

The Chief Servant had captured the essence of the reinvigoration and revitalization of these key sectors in the following words:

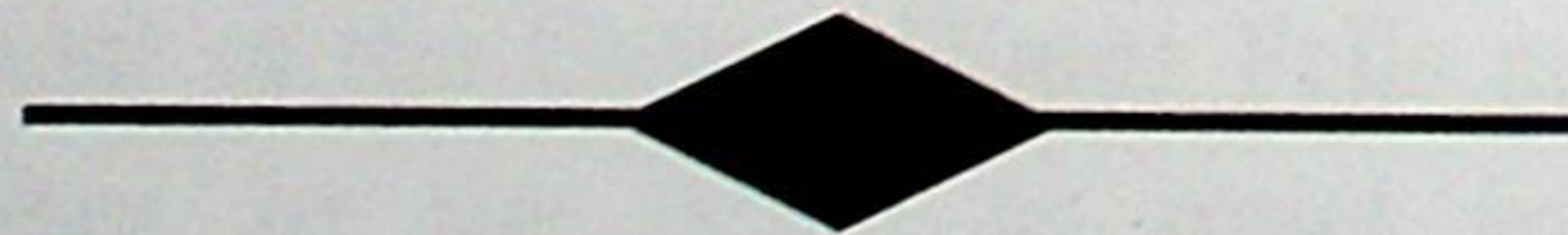
“...what we desire for Niger State now and by year

2020 is a State of abundant food security; economic prosperity for our people; a healthy and highly educated citizenry; aesthetically appealing and environmentally healthy cities, villages and rural settlements; an investors' haven; the tourists' irresistible holiday destination, one comparable to the best resorts and sites around the world; and a State with a most befitting capital city."



Chapter Five

A PARADIGM SHIFT: SERVICE DELIVERY TO THE PEOPLE



One of the most interesting phenomena in Nigeria today has remained the issue of dividends of democracy. In these days when the proverbial dividends are in short supply in some parts of the country, a new lease of life has manifested for the people of Niger State within just two years of governor Mu'azu Babangida's administration.

In two years, the State has witnessed a radical but positive transformation that has brought monumental service delivery to the people. For this administration, service delivery is a must, a right of the people and not a privilege. It is also a positive approach to good leadership and development.

To succeed in this task, a new service delivery methodology was brought into play which involves efficient resource management that checks wastages and partnering processes that work with great reward.

The main pillars of this service delivery are anchored on the provision of quality education, healthcare, infrastructural development and agriculture amongst others, with the ultimate objective to add value to the quality of life of the people in many different ways.

Although governor Aliyu inherited a virtual decay in the entire system, he became challenged, rather than demoralized, to reverse the backward trend and put the state on a pedestal, a straight path to progress and development through his mission and vision that would catapult the State to be among the best three in the country by 2020.

When he came in, Governor Aliyu strengthened and took advantage of the Civil Service apparently aware, as a retired Permanent Secretary that the success of his administration lies with it. He was aware that neglecting the bureaucrats would be detrimental to his vision and mission.

Even though he met a depleted, uneducated, unmotivated, redundant and over-bloated civil service, the Governor took up the challenge of reforming it beginning with a biometric data capturing exercise to get the accurate size of the entire workforce. He thereafter increased the salaries of workers and ensured that they not only become computer literate but also owned computers of their own through the e-compliance training programme. So far, the civil service has become very vibrant essentially because the administration has ensured that all subvention and

overhead costs due to Ministries, Parastatals and Agencies (MPAs) are not only released promptly but are adequate in order to discharge their statutory responsibilities.

Government has also ensured regular payment of salaries, gratuity/pensions and leave transport/grants to retired and serving civil servants. Since 2007, this administration has paid salaries totaling about N12billion to Civil Servants and another N1.5billion as allowances to political and public office holders. Government also paid a 50 per cent salary bonuses to the tune of N713million in December, concluded the payment of 2008 leave transport grant amounting to N211.9million and yet another 50 percent salary bonus in December 2008 for Eidel Kabir and Christmas.

It is no longer a nightmare to retire from the Civil Service in Niger State. Governor Aliyu has ensured the prompt payment of all retirement benefits to its retirees and released the sum of N1.3billion for the take-off of the contributory pension scheme in 2008.

The Due Process

Nigeria's democratic experience has been criticized as being too wasteful This is linked to the factors of misappropriation, inflation and an over-dependence

on government to provide the needed resources for governance. The Due Process Unit in Niger State was established by the administration of Dr. Muazu Babangida Aliyu, to reduce wastages, inflation and standardize the process of awarding contracts in Niger State. Before now vetting of contract sums were not rigorously pondered nor verified. This threw up a highly corrupt system that compromised not only contracts in questions but also the quality of work done suffered greatly. The new standardized form of contracting in Niger State which follows through due process has reduced drastically what the government hitherto paid for contracts. In other words it has been able to achieve better value for its money. One of the indices of development is the derivation of value for money well spent in the service of the people, this is what the due process unit has been able to achieve in Niger State.

It is instructive to note that the 21st Century has thrown up several challenges and this has invariably changed the ways government does business. The Niger State government is peopled by highly exposed individuals who are in tune with the changing global fortunes of the times and are overtly aware that government can no longer fund its projects all the time, that it is not only the responsibility to cater to the

welfare of the people, but that private enterprises can also contribute their quota to the general development of the society. The PPP idea borrows heavily from the latter summation. Public-Private Partnership is the synergy between the government and private individuals or firms to provide goods and services. These provisions nonetheless are paid for because profit is the motif of entrepreneurs. However, the multiplier effect that stems from these synergies is enormous aside providing goods and services, it also provides paid employment and livelihood; above all it leads to overall index of development thus increasing manifold not only the quality of life but breeds peace, tranquility and a general advancement of the society. In Minna, this has been demonstrated through the Gen. Wushishi 500 flats Housing Scheme which is nearing completion. There is also Talba Housing Scheme which has 500 flats all in Minna.

Even before the meltdown descended on the global economy and forced many governments to cut spending, the State Government had, through its mission and vision, prioritized and ensured it strictly followed due process, transparency and accountability in the execution of its projects and programmes. The institution of the due process mechanism has so far

brought sanity into the award of contracts and public procurements to ensure prudent management of the limited resources of government. Under the new arrangement, this administration has continued to save a lot of funds through contract tendering and competitive bidding.

Aware of the grossly inadequate revenues from the Federation Account and the internally generated funds, government adopted the Public Private Partnership (PPP) approached as an alternative drive for infrastructural development and efficient service delivery to the people.

The PPP arrangement has provided the leeway for the private sector to partner with the public sector for mutual benefits. Such partnership has yielded dividends in the execution of some laudable projects which includes the on-going Mass Housing Projects in Minna, Bida and Kontagora; the leasing of Badeggi Rice Mills; the Minna Solar Energy Street Lights Projects, the Garam Model City, the Zuma Rock Tourist Development Project, the development of Industrial layout of Garam near Suleja, the construction of additional block of hostels at the College of Education Minna, and the provision of

internet facilities for students' online registration at the College, amongst other projects.

Education

The revolutionary trend of Governor Aliyu began with the education Sector. And he made it clear in his now famous and logical statement that; "Education is the foundation of every society, education is the foundation for development, education is development".

In order to situate education properly, as a catalyst for the rapid transformation of the State, the Governor embarked on a major reform which saw the Ministry of Education splitted into two Ministries Basic and Tertiary (Higher) education.

The major thrust of the administration's intervention in this sector was the free education initiative for boys and girls at basic education level. This implies the non-payment of tuition and all other fees by pupils irrespective of their State of origin. The Education for All Initiative has instantly increased enrolment into Schools by more than 30 per cent; and is costing the State N2billion annually.

Additionally, this administration is paying the

NECO and WAEC examination fees for all Secondary Schools' graduating students as part of measures to assist the parents in the education of their children. Government has expended N300 million for these fees as well as for the procurement of examination materials, laboratory reagents and chemicals to prepare the students adequately. These pragmatic and historical achievements are being legally institutionalized so that they could outlive this administration.

Government has also re-introduced the Teachers Grade II Certificate to strengthen man-power development at the Primary School level through the provision of Corps of Teaching Assistants at that level. There are also plans to de-merge the Junior Secondary Schools level from the Primary School and run it as a stand-alone-programme, as is currently being proposed in a review of the National Education Policy. The administration is also planning to integrate or incorporate the Almajiri Islamic School system into the Western Education System with a view to harnessing and harmonizing their potentials for societal growth and development.

Governor Aliyu has also invested remarkably in the upgrading of infrastructure and rehabilitation of the

physical environment of schools. This government has constructed a total of 238 classrooms, renovated 171, and provided 11,774 sets of furniture for pupils/students and 867 sets of furniture for teachers and also sunk 20 boreholes in various schools across the State.

The State Tertiary Institutions are being refocused to meet the common developmental needs of the society. Scholarships and bursaries have been increased while government released N150million for the payment of outstanding scholarships to both local and foreign students while another N200million is being spent on fresh applicants. However, a more sustainable arrangement is being worked out to finance education through the Student's Study Loan Scheme to enable students' secure loan facilities for their education.

The Government also rendered financial assistance of over N56million to a few tertiary institutions within and outside the State, and has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with others to assist the State in the areas of research and capacity building in various fields.

Education

Introduced Free Girl-Child Education from primary to Tertiary levels. Donated N25million and N20million as counterpart fund promised Minna and Bida Emirates Education Foundations.

Released the sum of N520million for UBE counterpart fund for 2006 projects.

Released N150million for payment of scholarship to indigenes of Niger State in tertiary institutions.

N14.4million was released for payment of outstanding NECO registration fees inherited from immediate past administration.

The implementation of 50% increase in the students' daily feeding rate.

Upward review of monthly honoraria for Literacy Facilitators from N1,000.00 to N3,000.00.

Successful Training of 200 teachers in Mathematics and Science by Ministry of Education in collaboration with JICA a foreign base support.

The release of over N18million for the construction of a wall fence at the GGSS Minna to forestall further

encroachment.

The downward review of student's registration fees at IBB University, Lapai from N80, 000.00 to N30, 500.00 Per Session.

Agriculture

The present economic meltdown has only justified Governor Aliyu's persistent call for a return to agriculture and solid minerals as the most reliable mainstay of the nation's economy. He believes that the diversification of the economy and the optimization of food production, fisheries and livestock as well as solid minerals are the only Panacea to the global economic crisis.

With about 8.6million hectares of arable land, the State has an enviable capacity to feed this country if adequate attention was given to agriculture. The government is aware of this, hence, it introduced two core programmes, that is; Niger State Feeds the Nation and Protein for All-Talba Initiatives, which involves the mass production of Rice, Maize, Sorghum and Sugar in Zone A; Yam, Cassava and Tree Crops in Zone B; Cotton, Groundnuts and Millets in Zone C; While Shear Butter and Locust Bean trees will also be domesticated for large scale production.

Homestead fisheries, aqua-culture and development of Livestock are being facilitated in the Protein initiative. The idea is for the State to also explore its areas of comparative advantage and see the possibility of processing and exporting Livestock to other parts of the country and beyond.

To maximize the full potentials of the sector, government had earlier reorganized the Ministry of Agriculture and established that of Fisheries and Livestock to achieve the desired objective. The administration is strengthening and supporting the National Cereal Research Institute, Badeggi, the Federal University of Technology, Minna and the Agricultural Extension Services of the State Agricultural Development Project (NSADP), by providing logistics and co-funding for relevant research. This support has bore fruits already as the State was adjudged the overall best Rice producer in 2008.

The major targets in achieving the Vision 3:2020 include the annual timely distribution of 30,000 metric tones of fertilizers to farmers, provision of 1,000 tractor units, 100 units of boom sprayer and combine

harvesters by 2011, rehabilitation of 12 irrigation schemes and the development of five new ones by 2015. The rehabilitation of Badeggi Rice Mill is nearing completion while efforts are already on to resuscitate the moribund fertilizer company in Zungeru.

Other targets being steadily actualized include the rehabilitation of grains storage silos at Wushishi, Pandogari, Salka, Badeggi, and the completion of that of Kutigi by the year 2011. The target also includes the development of ten (10) Ox-bow lakes in each senatorial zone, Veterinary Centres and livestock clinics, and the improvement of infrastructural facilities at Shayi Grazing Reserves and three (3) other integrated grazing reserves in the State.

Annually, this administration has made it a point of duty to arrest the soaring food prices through the purchase of 3,500 metric tones of assorted grains from farmers under the Buffer stock programme. This is carried out yearly at the cost of N200million.

In the area of agricultural manpower development, the administration boosted the capacity of the College of Agriculture, Mokwa, with the sum of N21million to improve infrastructural facilities to meet accreditation requirements. The College is being considered for

New Hospital.

- * Released the sum of N1.4million for the fumigation of 4 hospitals in the state.
- * Connected 3 Health Schools and the Ministry of Health to the internet to facilitate the HMIS system.
- * Provided free cancer prevention treatment in partnership with African Cancer Prevention Group from USA and care people Foundation.
- * Purchased and distributed 100,594 doses of Coartem to Children under five years in all the Local Government Areas to control Malaria.

Infrastructural Development

Perhaps, one of the most conspicuous achievements of Governor Aliyu-led administration can be found in the area of infrastructural development. In this sector, government has embarked on the aggressive development of cities and towns (in phases) to bring them in tune with its urban/city renewal aspirations.

In recognition of the strategic importance of good roads and adequate infrastructure to the actualization of vision 3:2020, government has completed the

dualization of 2.5 kilometre Yakubu Lame/Ibrahim Aliyu Roads at the cost of N543, 028,478.00 and 49 kilometre Mu'azu Mohammed/Zarumai Onigbinde Roads at the cost of N809, 139,700.00. Work is about to be completed for the dualization of the 2.2 kilometre A.P Kpakungu to Mobil Roundabout road in Minna, at the cost of N570,109,434.50 while the rehabilitation of 3.5 kilometre road is being carried out in Agaie at the cost of N220,215,665,00. The administration also reconstructed some collapsed culverts along Bangaie and Fogun Wards in Bida town at a cost of N23, 918,796.00 through direct labour.

Government also intends to provide dualized Roads fitted with street lights in all the Emirate headquarters of the State. Already, contracts for the dualization of Kontagora township roads and the rehabilitation of selected roads in Kuta are being awarded. In addition to these, the administration has demonstrated its commitment to the completion of few road contracts inherited from the previous government, including an outstanding payment of over N200million for the rehabilitation of Bida township roads.

In order to ease traffic flow in Minna, enhance the aesthetic value of the city and improve lighting for

security purposes, government awarded contract for the reactivation and installation of new street lighting projects made up of conventional and solar powered type street lighting systems. The first phase which is covering a distance of 72.8kilometres is almost completed at the cost of N574,993,475.63.

Government intends to rehabilitate the 55 kilometre Lumma to Babanna Road, 11 Kilometre Batati to Daban Road, and the 20 kilometre Suleja to Gurara roads. The administration has kept a sustained pressure on the Federal Government to dualize the Suleja-Minna Road and is planning to construct a flyover road network over Suleja town from Maje through the Public Private Partnership (PPP) arrangement. Also, the government is planning, through the PPP, to collaborate with the Federal Government to achieve the development of Gurara International Tourist Centre, the Baro Ports, the Minna-Abuja Railway Network, the Zungeru and Gurara Hydro-Power Station and the Minna Modern Airport City.

Plans are also underway to connect Zamfara State with Niger State from Kotankoro through inter-State road networks. The State Government, through the

joint funding system with local governments, would also provide 5 kilometre surfaced roads in each of the 25 local government areas.

Governor Aliyu's administration has also signed an MOU with a South African-based Asphalt production company, Messrs Carboncor Road, Technology Nig. Ltd, for the establishment of a cold Asphalt production plant in Minna, with the capacity to produce 300 metric tones per day of cold asphalt. In addition to Certificate of Occupancy issued for the land to be used, a two million dollar bank guarantee has been issued in favour of the company to begin production.

A three-arm-posh State House is also being proposed for the State. The site has already been identified at Maitumbi in the outskirts of Minna and when the project becomes actualized, it would house the Executive, the Judiciary and the Legislative arms of government.

Under yet another PPP Package, the State government plans a twin city to Abuja, which is expected to bring Suleja at par with the Federal Capital city in terms of first class infrastructural facilities and social amenities. The project is to be located along

Madalla to Kaduna Road. The housing and other facilities in the proposed city would help in reducing the scramble for residential accommodation in Abuja and in return boost socio-economic development of the State.

In line with government desire to transform the State capital, a master plan for the development of Minna city Centre is already in place and the proposed project would improve the central part of Minna (Mobil/Minna Market Area) which would provide a 45metre high 15 storey observatory tower with a view of 24 kilometre radius around the city. The high rise building is expected to house shopping Malls, Car Park, first class Restaurants etc.

Meanwhile, the State Government has established the State Road Maintenance Agency which will, henceforth, be responsible for the maintenance and development of all State roads. With this development, the State engineering Personnel will be effectively utilized as they will be exposed to more and greater challenges.

Infrastructure

- * Dualisation of major roads in Minna metropolis.
- * Purchase and Supply of large number of Transformers to improve power supply in the state.
- * Existing industry layouts are reorganized and new ones developed all over the state.
- * Construction of blocks of class rooms at school of Nursing Bida.
- * Furnished State Rehabilitation Centres with the sum of N1.6million.
- * The re-acquisition of plots of lands in the premises of some schools, in Minna earlier allotted to individuals by the immediate past administration.
- * Redesigned Minna and Suleja Master Plan.
- * Construction of 1000units of houses Minna for the state civil servants
- * Construction of 500units each of houses in Bida and Kontagora

Water Resources And Rural Electrification

The administration declared the year 2009 as the year of water. Government will concentrate on the provision of potable drinking water to the people because it is mindful that availability of good, clean water would also improve the health conditions of the citizens and help in the eradication of water borne

diseases.

So far, the administration has spent N1.1 billion in the water sub-sector throughout the State. In order to improve water supply to the State Capital, government signed a contract worth N299, 914,300.00 for the rehabilitation of Tagwai Dam, originally designed to last for 21 years but which had been abandoned for over 31 years without maintenance. To also compliment the city's water supply drive, government awarded another contract of N210 million for the dredging and reactivation of Bosso Dam and treatment plant. Work has been completed on both dams.

The State government is also providing rural mini water schemes at Kataeregi, Kuta, Lemu, Madaka, Mashegu and Agwara at the cost of N180 million under the SNECOU-MDG's Projects.

Like the water sector, government has a deliberate power and energy policy primarily centred on urban and State-wide rural electrification programme. To this end, 84 distribution transformers and associated installation materials were purchased and distributed to various communities through the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) at the total cost of 269,940,421.00. Work on the electrification of villages

across the three Senatorial Zones of the State is being implemented through the PPP arrangement at the cost of N1.5billion as the government is bent on ensuring the completion of all on-going rural electrification projects across the State.

The development of conventional and renewable energy sources such as hydro-power, solar power and wind power are being pursued aggressively. Already the administration has signed an MOU with a leading Hydro-Power Generation Company, Messrs Trans-Atlantic Investment Company Inc., to generate an estimated 250 megawatts of power from Gurara Water Falls in the first Phase. The package would also include a high class tourism component estimated to cost \$500million under the PPP initiatives with a three year completion target.

On the solar energy development, an MOU has since been signed with Nanergy Company Inc., of USA, for the installation and manufacturing of facilities to produce 5 megawatts of Amorphous Silicon Photovoltaic (PV) modules and approximately 100,999kwt of lead acid Batteries in the State. The company has also identified government schools, health institutions and selected government offices

where stand-alone-solar-powered equipments would be installed. With all these arrangements, the State is being repositioned by the administration as a truly, real Power State. The State Electricity Agency is also established, and replaces the Rural Electrification Board (REB) to provide electricity to the rural people.

Local Government And Chieftaincy Affairs

This administration is aware and firmly believes in the local government as the tier of government that is truly grassroots oriented and closer to the majority of Nigerians who live in the hinterland. To actualize its commitment to the development of the local government, Governor Aliyu's administration ensured the prompt and timely release of statutory allocations so that they could execute meaningful developmental projects for the people.

Government also introduced, and is successfully implementing the Ward Development Project where all the over 200 wards in the State gets N500,000 monthly to identify and execute projects that are of direct bearing to the people at that level. Because of its immense success, government is now considering doubling the amount and also thinking of moving a little further by introducing the Polling Unit

Development Committee for the same developmental purposes.

Government did not also interfere with the Political processes of the local government areas which led to the free and fair conduct of the local government elections. Governor Aliyu has also encouraged, strongly, the functionality of the legislative arm of the local governments in the true spirit of federalism.

On the traditional institution, this administration has continued to recognize the role of the Emirs and other rulers in the promotion of peace, development, morality and as the custodians of our overall culture. This is why the government is in the fore-front of a nationwide campaign to accord the Emirs and other traditional rulers a constitutional role so that they can be empowered to discharge their original role and duty.

In order to practically demonstrate its attachment to the traditional institution, the administration of Governor Aliyu, himself a traditional title holder of Talban Minna, re-introduced and reinvigorated the Durbar which is now being carried out during every Sallah Festivals. The Durbar has indeed brought back

wards, and these wards actually have their peculiar leaders and specific areas of interest. Sometimes the people of a particular ward might want to have regular electricity and water supply, in another ward, the people might be more interested in security issue i.e the protection of lives and property. In some others, the provision of jobs for the young as well as social infrastructures might be of utmost interest. These diversities actually tell of people's diverse interest, to which they often seek government's direct intervention. Especially in a democracy, such interest are often so numerous, yet governments do not often have the essential funds with which to meet all expectations, especially in our type of rural-oriented society where development is quite low and where development indices are almost nil.

The idea of Wards Development Projects (WDP) emanated from the Niger State government's drive to reach the door-steps of the people with peculiarly satisfactory development projects and programmes which will serve to transform their lives, and provide their interest in the affairs of the government of the day. It was recognized that in the years past, development proposals and programmes were far from the people because:

- (a) most thoughts and actions were centred either State or LGA level, in which requests and demands would be too many to address;
- (b) there was absence of the spirit of accountability and transparency;
- (c) the people's peculiar interests especially at the wards levels were never taken into consideration;
- (d) a lot of political mischief and marginalization was in place;
- (e) most leaders were grossly, insensitive to the actual, need of the people, and were rather obsessed with the quest for self-satisfaction at the expense of societal growth, and
- (f) developments were often mistakenly centred only on States and LGA headquarters.

When Dr. Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu (OON) emerged as the Chief Servant of Niger State, he decided to follow a different path of governance by first thinking of what leadership should be, and of what relevance should it be to the people. He agrees totally with the concept of Servant leadership in which people are the first point of reference people as a force, tool and end-result of development. His actions as a governor, therefore, have to be defined by people-centred consciousness,

and his motivations, aspirations and enthusiasm must be shaped by that consciousness. He equally agrees with Bill Newman who has written in his book *10 Laws of Leadership* (1997) “Leaders have empires in their brains....Leadership is that special and unique ability to influence people to move toward goals that are beneficial and meet the group's best interests... A leader is one who has the courage to dream, the ability to organize and the strength to execute the action necessary. A leader is simply one who knows where he/she wants to go, gets up and goes”. A leader, therefore, must have vision, vision of transformation, of focus and of self-discipline, geared towards changing the fortunes of his people, his community. Vision possessed by such a leader must be able to create “power”; it should be empowered by goals, which are “vision with feet”. The vision should be enriched by a noble dream.

It is easy to know Dr. Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu's nature of commitment to rural growth and wards, developments from part of rural growth and wards developments from part of what he wrote as foreword to the publication, 'NIGER STATE: Produce. Power, Prosperity. Development Action Plan (DAP) for Niger State' to the effect that “We are resolute in making

Niger State a prosperous place for our people to live in happiness and security and we shall leave no one in doubt about our determination to succeed. We shall be guided constantly by our manifest, and our credo, which stipulates:

“In the making is a State of brilliance that is progressive and modernized with vision and initiatives in developmental strategies. Niger State will prosper economically, socio-politically and culturally. We will as a family live in harmony and respect our differences by always putting our State's needs ahead of personal interests. We may be different in so many ways, but the secret to our success is buried in our diversity. We have enough knowledge perspectives, answers and alternatives to always draw from”.

“Wisdom comes from experience and flexibility in our thinking and in our actions on which the quality of our lives depend. We must harness our enormous human and natural potentials. Through our hard work and determination, we can collectively take Niger State into the league of the three most developed States in Nigeria and we shall be the pride of other States. Ours would be the Promised Land where love

and mutual respect for one another will be abundant. Corruption and looting of public treasury will be stamped out from our policy.

“We will be exemplary in our leadership style and our standards of performance will be very high. Transparency and accountability will be our watchwords. We hope that each of our calculated steps will get us closer to our dream.

The Chief Servant also established the fact that “we will consciously create a harmonious environment for the general well-being of all Nigerlites and as a token of our love for generations to come”.

All these promises have a lot to do with rural transformation through the mechanism of wards development.

The Chief Servant's style tells a lot of his unique approach to issues of development. He is sensitive, charismatic, sure-footed and down-to-earth in his projections, especially on rural development and particularly on wards development.

Niger State is made up of twenty five (25) Local Government Areas, and 274 wards whose overall

development is of major interest to the State government. The wards are closest to the people, and they indicate clearly the essence of democracy as a grassroots form of politics. The development of the wards is expected to indicate:

- (a) that people are bound to feel the measures and significance of projects;
- (b) that people can be employed to service development in their own communities, and
- (c) Spirit of accountability and transparency can easily be engendered, at work.

What happens at the wards can always tell the extent of the sincerity (or lack of it) of the government in power. At the ward level, culverts and drainages can be easily constructed. Young people could be employed to do some jobs. Boreholes could be built to supply water. Monitoring is easier. And leaders are easily detected if they are truly committed to spreading the dividends of democracy.

Since the emergence of Governor Aliyu in Niger State, the wards have witnessed drastic changes, because every month, ward are allocated money to carry out crucial projects. Quite a lot had been achieved in places such as construction of overhead water tanks, new classrooms, clinics, markets, desks

and benches and boreholes, while classrooms were renovated, and electricity was extended to places (see attached information).

The following are the characteristics of ward development programmes:

- (a) Ward development projects committees work through the Ministry for Local government, Community Development and Chieftaincy Affairs;
- (b) The Communities appoint members of the projects Committees. These are made up of one female, a village representative and an experienced retired civil servant. Political party membership does not influence such a choice;
- (c) The Communities determine the nature, growth and physical completion of the projects;
- (d) The Ministry also constitutes Implementation Committees headed by the highest political office holders and seasoned administrators (Monitoring Committees);
- (e) The Local Government Monitoring Committees meet with the Honourable Commissioner once every month to review the projects. They also attend meetings to deliberate on official reports of expenditures and bills of quantities;
- (f) Separate bank accounts have been opened for

- the ward projects, different from the accounts of the Local Government Councils. This is to make for accountability. Local government Coordinators are signatories to the ward development accounts, as well as treasurers and directors of personnel of the local governments;
- (g) The design, hosting and placements of all ward developments projects are already on the internet. This is for the records and enhancement of transparency. These projects can be seen directly, and are accessible;
 - (h) Receipt booklets have been designed and printed for all the Local government Coordinators. File jackets are also designed for each ward Committee.

Conclusion

The Wards Development Projects (WDP) occupies a unique place in the strategies of development adopted by the Chief Servant. Though new and refreshing, Nigerlites do not find it cumbersome and distasteful or a threat to their personal or collective survival. It rhymes with the Chief Servant's taste for anything new but refreshingly progressive. Democracy is not only felt at every level, people are made to be participatorily part of

the process. Peace and tranquility are promoted, and sense of self-pride and self-accomplishment among the people are also enhanced.

Every citizen that had spoken on it had praised the wisdom and tact behind it. The entrepreneurship of the hardworking, committed and positive minded servant-leader is once more appreciated. If copied all over Nigeria, it is most certain that development would get to the doorstep of every citizen of the land, aside the fact that true democracy would have been achieved as every one would be a direct participant in government.

Since Nigeria is a deeply made up of rural communities with people of divergent interests, this strategy offers itself as one of the best methods at attaining democracy in its full force. Nigeria is ripe for full development. And Nigerians are certainly the people to wake up, and embrace the reality of this challenge.



Chapter Seven

MEETING THE MDGs CHALLENGE: THE JOURNEY SO FAR



When Dr. Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu (OON), the Chief Servant of Niger State was given the Ward Development Fund Initiative Award, in December, 2008 (Blue-Ribbon Award) by UNICEF "C" field partners, Nigerians and interested foreigners were not surprised, for specific reasons: the man has maintained consistency in his determination to wipe off under-development and stagnation in the 374 wards in his State, and he has so managed the affairs that his success is unprecedented in the history of Nigeria. Secondly, he has continuously maintained a democratic link with the grassroots such that the LGA bosses see in him a role model who has influenced a new direction in public leadership. But the ward development has not been the only aspect of his major concern. He has been keenly interested in all spheres of the sector economy and polity. In an interview, he had said, *"We will give the necessary incentives to whoever is coming to invest in the State. We believe in that. When you come here you are going to thrive and make more money out of the State. We invite everybody that is interested to come."*

The stamp of sincerity, commitment and seriousness of purpose is there in that statement. He is

a marvelously dynamic and serious-minded servant leader who takes the issue of development so seriously. The Blue-Ribbon Award was in "*acknowledgment of your policy thrust to promoting community democracy as a new approach to modern governance at the grassroots level through the people's participation is the testimony of a focused political leadership*". The concept of Millennium Development Goals (MDG) emanated in 2000 as a development strategy for new millennium. It is one in which high expectation, new experimentation, scientific and technological breakthrough (computer wisdom) determine youth. It is a millennium of the development of the human race in all ramifications. It is one which calls for urgent development of the rural places. Essentially, it is an age targeted at the total eradication of poverty and want - when good health nurtured by better nutrition; education backed with scientific inquiry; and girl-child development focused on with total commitment. It is an age of freedom from want, helplessness, darkness and exploitation; rather it is aimed at positively exploiting our available local resources at our local settings for the purposes of industrial and economic development. At the millennium summit in 2000, representatives of 189

countries committed themselves towards a world in which sustaining development and eliminating poverty would receive the highest attention.

The implication is glaring: every government is supposed to set an agenda of development in aspects of agriculture, rural development, health, education, electrification, water supply and tourism among other factors of development. While politics is important (every citizen of the world deserves to be politically informed), the essential virtues of democracy are emphasized. Human development takes precedence over any other issue. Democracy itself should focus on the elements of development, while the end result should be the good health of the citizenry in all fields education, health and social transformation.

As a studious, dynamic and forward-looking servant-leader, Dr. Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu has not failed to take strong steps in doing the obvious, as a mark of respect for the MDG, in his State:

1. Settlement of NECO and WASCE fees for students irrespective of their States of origin;
2. Ownership housing scheme completed (M. I. Wushishi and Talba Housing Estate), in Minna and the foundation of others laid in Kontagora

and Bida;

3. Capacity building of higher level civil servants (I.T. and e-compliance training) and ownership of computers with 50% subsidy;
4. Dualization and beautification of some major roads in the State capital to ease the movement of vehicles and people;
5. Improved visible projects in all Local Government Areas;
6. Improved funding of Government Ministries and parastatals;
7. Increase and prompt payments of salaries to civil servants;
8. Resuscitation of environmental sanitation and demolition of illegal structures in towns across the State;
9. Introduction of due process to check corrupt acts and absence of accountability and transparency;
10. Lobbied for increase in power supply from 10 mega watts to 30 megawatts to improve energy requirement in the State;
11. Offered free medical treatment for ailments such as eye, goiter, and cancer;
12. Release of State counter-part funding to International Donor Partners;
13. Promotion of tourism potentials of the State;
14. Prompt payment of scholarship to indigent

- students;
15. Provision of enabling environment for the establishment of Small and Medium Scale Industries;
 16. Encouragement of Girl Child Education;
 17. Signed MoU with foreign medical experts to provide HITECH medical services in the State that were hitherto only accessible abroad;
 18. Introduction of participatory interactive forum e.g. on the State of education in Niger State;
 19. Conduct of accountability forum, through media charts e.g. "Governor Speak" on NTA and Radio phone-in programme;
 20. Rehabilitating the small and medium cottage industries through special loans to local industrialists;
 21. Rehabilitation of educational institutions to create conducive learning environment;
 22. Motivating self-help projects by 70% State's counterpart;
 23. Giving one million naira monthly grant to wards, for project execution;
 24. 40% subsidy on sales of fertilizer to farmers;
 25. Registration of all NCE, HND and Degree graduates for employment and artisan training/empowerment;
 26. Free primary/secondary education for both boys and girls and supply of uniforms;

27. Free medical services for children, pregnant women and the aged;
28. Encouragement of public private partnership (PPP) in the development process of the State;
29. Re-invigoration of Poverty Eradication Programme through NAPEP;
30. Employment of 3000 graduates of NCE, Diploma and Degree;
31. Upward review of salaries of medical doctors, to check brain drain or massive exodus;
32. Purchase of large quantity of transformers to alleviate shortage of electricity supply;
33. 300 million US dollars for hydro-electric project at Gurara Falls;
34. A modern 5-star hotel to be built to support tourism in the State;
35. Upgrading of water facilities across the State through foreign investors;
36. Restoration of tractors hiring scheme to support agricultural prospects;
37. Establishment of rice mill at Edozhigi; to boost food production;
38. Re-invigoration of micro-credit scheme to support local industries in the State;
39. Provision of laboratory equipments and computers to boost science and technology in schools;
40. Substantial support to Federal Government

- Agencies to promote publicity, awareness and sensitization of the people;
41. Approval of N300 million to support Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) and Village Economic Development Solutions (VEDS) of NAPEP;
 42. Assisting the Life Rehabilitation Foundation (LRF) by Madam Chief Servant to salvage women, children and the youth;
 43. Re-introduction of Teachers Training Colleges, two per each senatorial district;
 44. Introduction of a new salary scale (structure for medical staff across the State) thereby checking professional exodus;
 45. In collaboration with World Bank, the State government through the Ministry of Investment, Commerce and Industry organized a sensitization lecture for local investors to boost their entrepreneurship skills and managerial abilities;
 46. Free treatment of people with ailments in collaboration with private partners and medical professionals both at home and abroad;
 47. Purchase of 100 tractors to boost agricultural prospects in the State;
 48. Release of over 200 metric tones grains from strategic grains reserves to ease food crisis and

- control prices of assorted grains across the State;
49. Granted assistance to Niger State Police Command to enable the Police curb and prevent various crimes;
 50. Over ₦50 million has been released to various agencies, NGOs and institutions as counterpart funding (e.g. UNICEF);
 51. Provision of ultra-modern transport system for school children and general public;
 52. Passing of child right Act Bill;
 53. Subsidy on grains to alleviate hunger and cushion the effect of global food crisis;
 54. Expansion of the Engr. A. A. Kure Modern Market through PPP, etc.

All these actions show the high level of seriousness by the Talba administration to change the fortunes of the State and people, in the light of MDG.

He is aware of the key principles that the State places premium on (as reflected in the Development Action Plan) which are:

- (a) Fear of God;
- (b) Recognition for real life achievements;
- (c) Accountability/transparency in public life;
- (d) Respect for elders and constituted authority, laws and regulations;
- (e) Caring for the under privileged, especially the

- (f) physically challenged and aged persons;
Governance for the good of the people rather than self or group interest;
- (g) Relating reward and wealth levels to productivity and contribution to economic output, rewarding excellence and hard work;
- (h) Sanctioning for non-performance.

He is also aware of the implications of various agencies to the fulfillment of his dreams, which is why he has attended to them with pronounced seriousness: German Technical Cooperation (GTZ); State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategic (SEEDS); State Action Committee on AIDS (SACA); Niger State Environmental Protection Agency (NISEPA); Niger State Urban Development Board (NUDB); Global Environmental Fund (GEF); Local Empowerment and Environmental Management Projects (LEEMP); United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP); United State Department for International Development (USAID); United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO); United Nations Children Education Fund (UNICEF); etc. These agencies open up to different advantages which have been tapped by the government to realize its MDG

dreams. He has been able to work effectively through these bodies because his vision and mission are very clear: to transform Niger State into one of the top three State Economies in Nigeria by the year 2020 by being established the focused orientation of the government. Agricultural development is anchored on tapping *“the diverse agricultural resources of the State to develop an agricultural sector that will guarantee food security, reduce rural poverty and accelerate economic development of the State. The sector shall be private section driven, however, with the government creating an enabling environment through public private partnerships”*. On education, the focus is *“on complete education: early child care and education, primary, junior secondary, senior secondary, adult and non-formal, science, technical and vocational and tertiary education”*. On health, the mission is *“to provide health services that are relevant, accessible and affordable to majority of the people, particularly the urban poor and the rural dwellers”*. On housing, government has been responding *“to the needs of all citizens, including urban squatters, for personal safety, basic infrastructure and services, to eliminate health and social problems”*. And on infrastructure, *“the most*

important of these include water supply, all season roads, electricity supply (solar, hydro etc), housing, health and educational facilities". All these have been subsumed under the points listed as the achievement of the administration.

But the Chief Servant has not relied only on his vision to pursue the achievement of the MDG. He has often inspired and motivated members of the State House of Assembly to show concern for their people at the constituencies. As a result of the rural nature of most communities, there has been lack of health facilities, educational opportunities and absence of water and electricity. But most members of the assembly have since decided to be committed to the transformation of the lives of their people, providing scholarships, water, and electricity; some are building roads, drainages, culverts, and bridges while some are erecting religious and social centres. Some of the legislators have been giving out soft loans, motorcycles and bicycles, sponsoring sports fiesta and cultural festivals and providing transformers. Girl-child education, environmental cleanliness, and erection of community halls have been performed by them. These have been seen in the 25 Local Government Areas of the

State, and there is even a healthy competition among the members on who provide better facilities to their constituencies.

The Chief Servant is equally conscious of the MDG office in the State, especially encouraging the office to clearly monitor development projects put in place by the Federal legislators (of State origin). These lawmakers (Representatives and Senators) have not closed their eyes to the needs of their communities and people who voted them in. MDGs projects of diverse significance are being pursued by these great patriots, especially since 2008. Such projects also include construction of primary healthcare centres and of classroom blocks; supply of furniture and equipment; supply of basic medical drugs; construction of hand pump and motorized boreholes; and supply of schools books. These are carefully distributed in all Local Government Areas in the State.

Conclusion

The journey into effective leadership takes a lot of planning, strategizing and decorum. It takes careful study of the environment and people, so that the essential needs would be met. Niger State is a unique

State in many ways. And its distinction is acknowledged all over the country as the power state. Talba's government seeks to re-establish the strength of that appellation, and make Niger a proud State, once again. His total dedication to issues of development has to do with his desire to meet the expectations of the MDG.

**SUMMARY OF PROJECTS EXECUTED THROUGH WARD
DEVELOPMENT SCHEME INITIATED BY DR. MUAZU
BABANGIDAS ADMINISTRATION**

N/S	LOCAL GOVERNMENT	NO OF PROJECTS	AMOUNT (N)	STATUS
1.	ADA	21	14,500,000.00	COMPLETED
2.	BORGU	36	16,257,000.00	COMPLETED
3.	CHANCHAGA	14	15,667,000.00	COMPLETED
4.	EDATI	48	14,219,182.00	COMPLETED
5.	GBAKO	20	13,823,000.00	COMPLETED
6.	GURARA	39	32,952,000.00	COMPLETED
7.	KATCHA	50	27,130,000.00	COMPLETED
8.	LAPAI	44	21,251,000.00	COMPLETED
9.	LAVUN	84	13,456,000.00	COMPLETED
10.	MAGAMA	36	23,709,000.00	COMPLETED
11.	MARIGA	38	35,719,000.00	COMPLETED
12.	MASHEGU	30	19,484,000.00	COMPLETED
13.	MOKWA	21	16,550,000.00	COMPLETED
14.	MUNYA	21	7,047,000.00	COMPLETED
15.	PAIKORO	17	15,194,000.00	COMPLETED
16.	RAFI	144	35,665,000.00	COMPLETED
17.	RIJAU	60	5,965,596.00	COMPLETED
18.	SULEJA	14	31,099,000.00	COMPLETED
19.	TAFA	14	20,485,000.00	COMPLETED
20.	SHIRORO	20	15,000,000.00	COMPLETED
21.	AGAIE	21	16,500,000.00	COMPLETED
22.	BOSSO	10	10,000,000.00	COMPLETED
23.	KONTAGORA	13	19,500,000.00	COMPLETED
24.	WUSHISHI	21	16,500,000.00	COMPLETED
25.	AGWARA	21	10,000,000.00	COMPLETED

Project types include borehole, concrete wells, schools furniture, renovation of community schools, health centers upgrade, electricity supply improvement, religious services, hand pumps. These have direct bearing on the well being of the people.



**Chapter
Eight**

**EMPOWERING WOMEN,
YOUTH AND FREED
PRISONERS: FIRST
LADY'S PRAGMATIC
FOCUS**





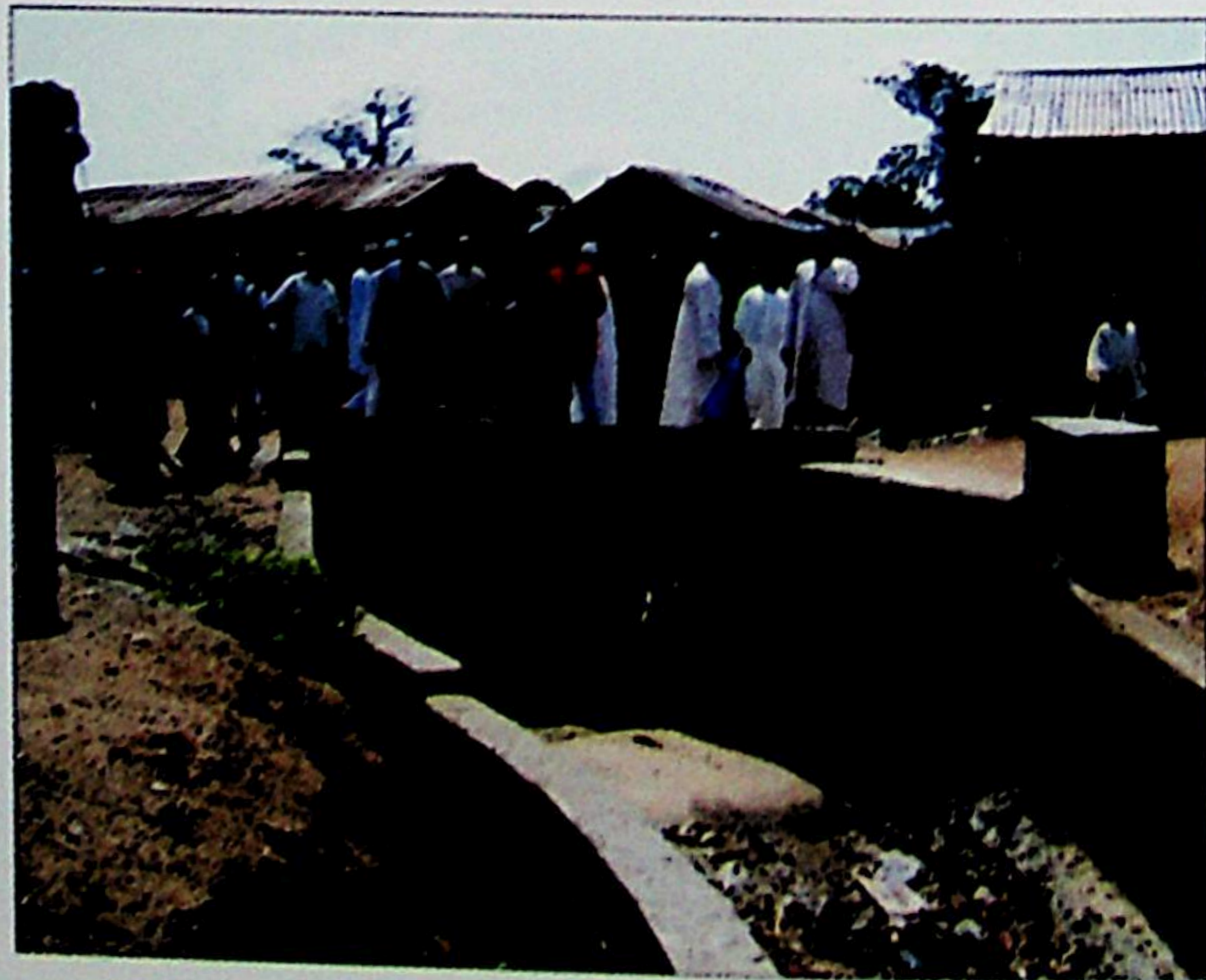
Hand Pump Borehole at Ekobaddeggi Ward



*Rehabilitation of Bi-Water Process machine
at Tungan-Magajiya Ward*



Constructed Culvert at Kata-Eregi Village



Construction of Culvert in Yamma Ward



Road construction in Minna town



Constructed Culvert at Essa Village in Essa Ward



Bosso water treatment tank



Students queue to board a school bus

The wife of the Chief Servant Hajiya Jummai Aliyu is no doubt a self motivated individual and a discerning one at that. The tradition of First Ladies is to always set-up institutions that would see to the affairs of youth and women who are by an act of incident a highly disenfranchised group of individuals. However and equally most importantly is the fact even in matters of being vulnerable, some individuals are more vulnerable than others. Prisoners are those who have been put away by the instrument of law, for going against the dictates of the constituted law and the society. The instrument sometimes does not guarantee that they are saved from exploitation and abuse while they are in prison. It is the latter that has motivated the First Lady, Hajiya Jummai Aliyu to look into the plight of women in Niger State prisons and see if it could be reviewed. This pragmatism of hers has seen to pay the option of fine to enable prisoners secure their freedom from the Nigerian Prisons, thereby making the prisoners to be eternally grateful to her. She also introduced reformation approaches to assist the released prisoners to fully be re-intergrated into the society. She has also privately and publicly contributed to the healthcare, economic development, capacity building of youth and women since her ascension as the

First Lady of Niger State.

She has indeed tried to re-emphasize the need for government at all levels, and well-meaning individuals to strive hard and make the life better for the less privileged.

Governance is a broad and demanding affair, and it is not something whose impact can be limited only to those within the direct corridors of power. This is one reason why some people easily define power as belonging to the rulers and the ruled, the governors and the governed. Power strives to satisfy the mantle-bearer, and those for whom the mantle exists.

In the Nigerian context, unlike in the early 1960s following political independence, the people in power have often been assisted by wives who should be companions to the "powerful" husbands. Such wives do not only assist to strengthen the homes, they equally assist to strengthen the seat of power by taking on projects which touch on the lives of the poor, hopeless and sick. Sometimes such projects like the Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) put in place by Maryam Abacha and the Better Life for Rural Women, a Programme conceived by Mrs. Maryam Babangida, were aimed at transforming the

lives of families, especially women, by making them realize their innate potentials.

The wives of such leaders are often propelled by a number of factors to contribute to the socio-economic well-being of the society and these are:

- (a) Most often, these women see themselves as mothers and home developers who should be able to find relevance in what nature has placed on their shoulders;
- (b) They see themselves often as privileged to assist the less-endowed in society; to advance the course of humanity and help develop the society;
- (c) They see themselves as helpers of their husbands on whose shoulders destiny has placed the mantle of leadership in which the development of society and people is emphasized;
- (d) They are not lazy and indolent, and are often given to the idea of performing actions which give nobility and wider acceptance to the governorship provided by their husbands;
- (e) They have been known to want to reach the poor and helpless through such Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs) as a demonstration of

their willingness to give back to society which has blessed them.

(f) Some really have to share fellow-feeling with Nigerian women and youth, through training, entrepreneurial skills, awards of scholarship and assisting cooperative societies.

These factors are important because they are about service to fellow beings. These women are most often patriots who also believe that the human society needs their own contributions, to make progress. They then put in a lot of energy, financial muscle and organizational skills in doing for society what would be of immense benefit. What she helped to do was virtually replicated in almost all States of the federation as most First Ladies had one agenda or the other to pursue on behalf of women and Hajia Yar'adua has her own project which assists women and youth, for self-empowerment. Chief (Mrs) Stella Obasanjo, a former Nigeria's First Lady, demonstrated flair for women and youth's self-accomplishment. Hajiya Maryam Babangida's Better life Programme, which used to be a Nigerian affair, is today extended to all Africa. It must be recalled that she actually received an award of doctorate degree from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (1984) for her efforts, just as Hajiya Turai Yar-

adua have equally received good recognition.

In *Niger Star*, Hajiya Jummai Babangida Aliyu is a good housewife, patriotic, gender-conscious and helpful Nigerian. She has been a source of pride to her husband, Dr. Abdulsazau Babangida Aliyu (OON) who had had occasion to speak of her in a complementary manner to the effect that: *“My wife (Hajiya Jummai Babangida Aliyu) is a strong support, a lover and a friend. She had been able to subordinate her interest and aspiration to ensure that her husband succeeds, which will now translate to her own success”*.

She has solidly stood behind her husband and his vision by forming an Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) called Life Rehabilitation Foundation (LRF) whose central focus includes girl-child education, prison rehabilitation, women empowerment and rehabilitation of destitutes and the disabled.

These groups are quite important to the society because they are often rejected and abandoned; they often remain poor and helpless. Nobody wants to associate freely with prisoners, though some of them are not exactly supposed to be so treated. There are dangerous elements in human society who lie against others, questing to destroy fellow beings. Moreover,

most of the prisoners are not well catered for. They lack good food and adequate medical attention. Their families are impoverished; indeed some families disintegrate the moment the heads get imprisoned. Yet children and wives of such prisoners should be taken care of with money, goods, and medical facilities.

Even in Nigeria today, it is well known that youths are the ones being mainly imprisoned because of material instincts which derail their moral foundations. They should be taken care of. Also, some young women being imprisoned are made sex slaves and it is even believed that homosexuality and lesbianism hold sway in our prisons. Some girls give birth to fatherless children behind bars. The situation of the prisoners in Nigeria is quite appalling.

As for girl-child education, it is known that especially in northern Nigeria, girls are often reluctantly sent to school. What some parents think about is marriage for the kids, some of whom are not as old as 14 years. In a situation such as this, girls who should be in school are denied the opportunity, and are not allowed to enjoy the advantages of modern living. They remain backward in orientation and childish in attitude. Girl-child education becomes a necessity to

expose every member of society to the merits of modern living, and to be able to contribute to the development of the society.

The disabled and destitute could be transformed to good, functional beings in society should they receive good attention, the type given to them by Hajiya Jummai Babangida Aliyu.

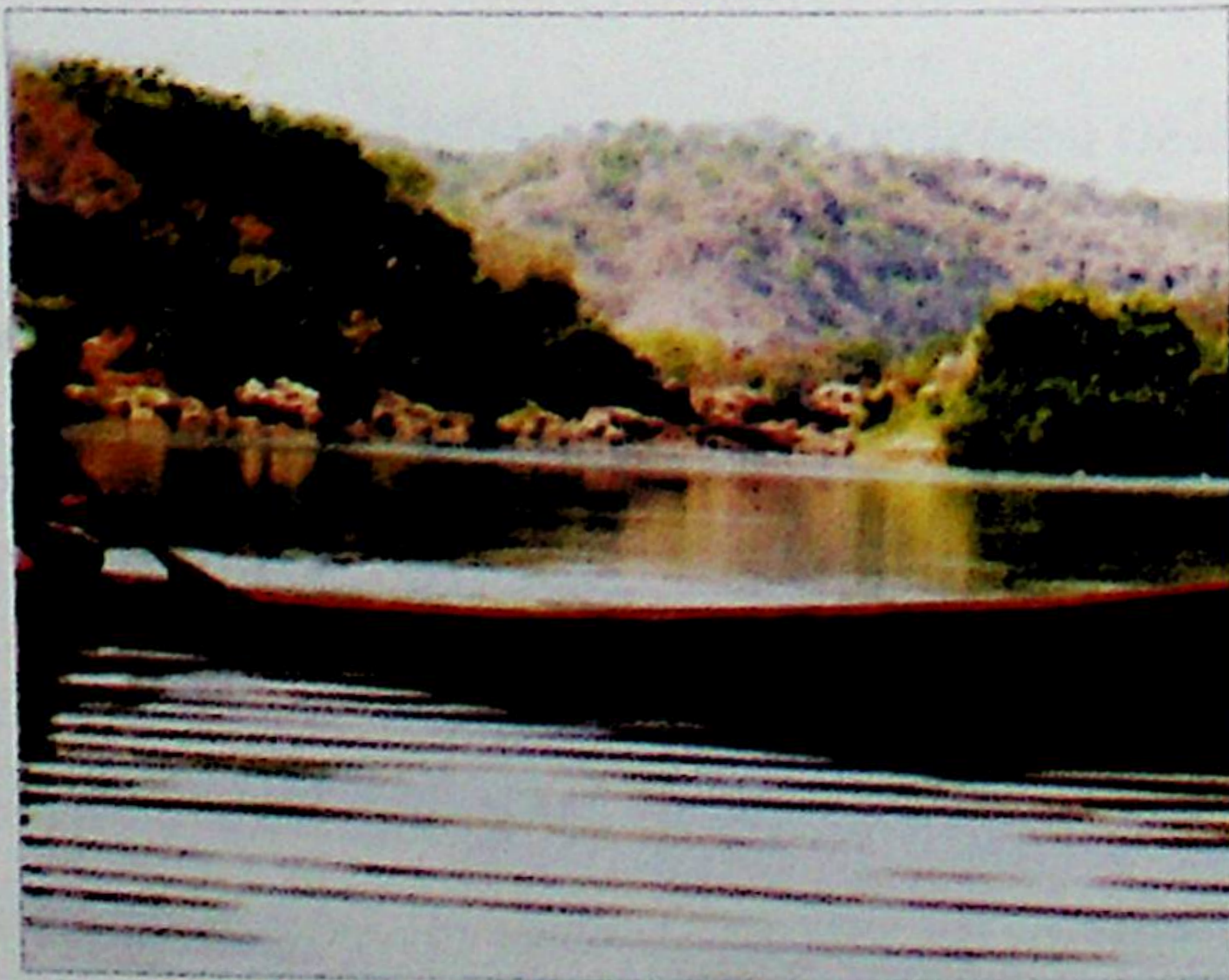
Hajiya Aliyu's kind-heartedness and the inborn desire to better the lots of women, children and the less-privileged in society were the motivating force behind her NGO. She has set up a functional Computer Centre at the Minna Central Prison for both inmates and staff.

She also assisted some destitutes of the Spiral Cord Association to secure NAPEP loans, and training. She gave them tricycles to ease their movement. She had made several visitations to the hospitals, old people's homes, rehabilitation centres, the orphanage and the leprosarium, where she distributed food items, detergents and toiletries as well as cash to the patients and inmates.

She personally settled the school fees and examination charges of many Secondary School girls



Renovated Clinic at Shaba-Washikpaya in Edotsu Ward



Plans underway to develop water transportation



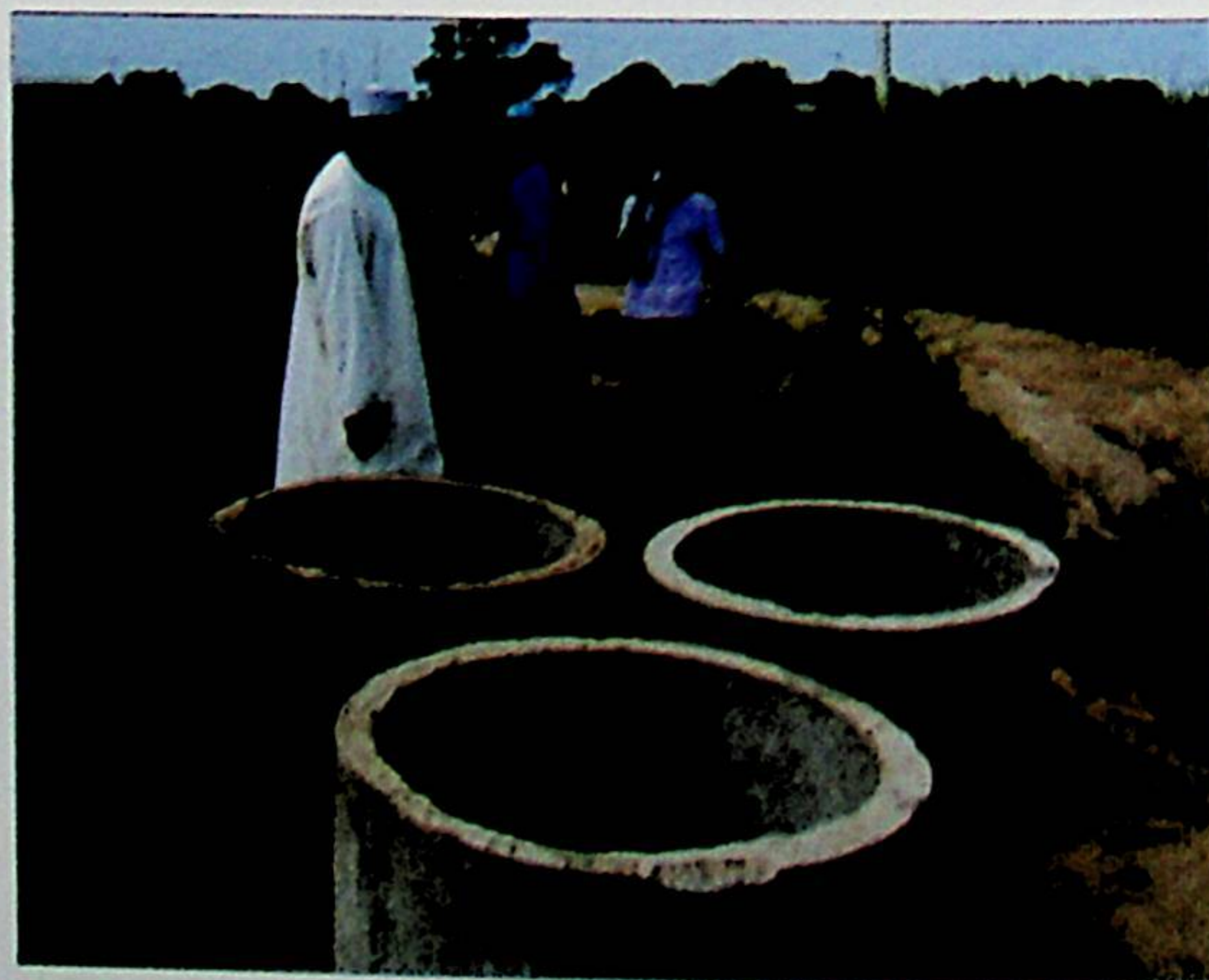
Reconstructed SSG's office



Hand Pump Borehole at Gada Olli



Constructed 1 Block of 2 Classrooms at Gallah Ward



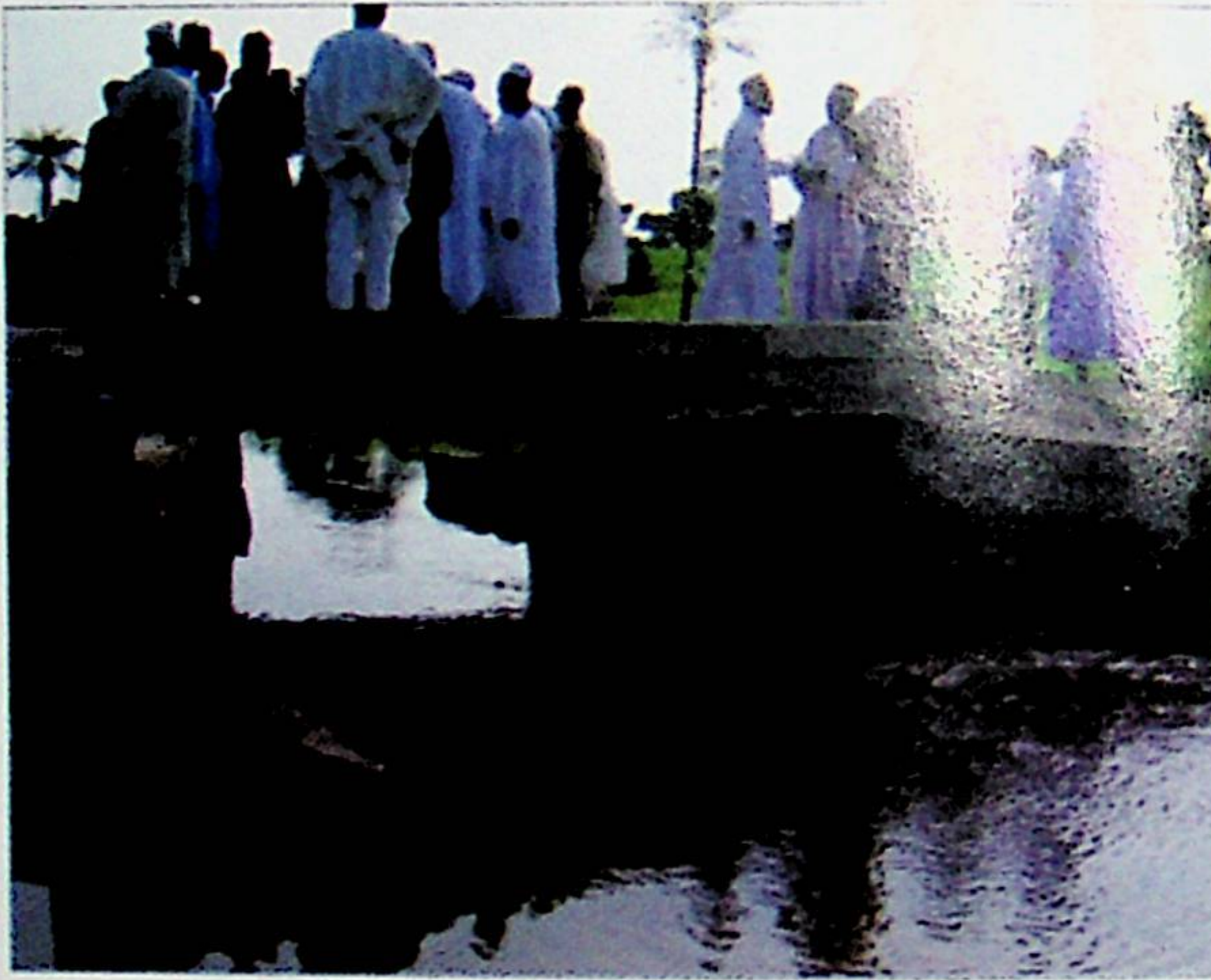
On-going of Construction of Culvert Rings for Borgu Ward



*On-going construction of J.S.S
at Kuchi in Kuchi Ward*



Completed Teachers' Resource Centre in Kontagora



Construction of Culvert at Edoko Village in Sheshi Ward



Construction of Kahigo Dispensary in Inkwai Ward

even before the State Government cancelled those fees. She once said, "We must encourage the girls to go to School. Education is now free. They must utilize this opportunity to get themselves literate as the gateway to self-reliance".

Mrs. Aliyu has equally demonstrated her total disapproval of girl-child rape, and she has led campaigns against it and HIV/AIDS to the palace of the Emir of Suleja, HRH Mallam Awwal Ibrahim and the former Speaker, House of Representatives, Hon. Patricia Etteh. The one-day sensitization workshop was organized by the federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) to check the increasing cases of rape in the State. She had then said, "*We must call for urgent intervention from all the stakeholders to fight this menace. The legislature must speed up action on the amendment of the bill on rape to adequately punish offenders*".

Her office had also organized an orientation workshop for micro-credit loan beneficiaries (in conjunction with the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development). This was organized to galvanize efforts to economically empower women; to provide a plan of action for the improvement of structures

designed to protect and advance the rights of women with a view to enhancing their welfare and creating opportunities for self-actualization.

Through her effort, many women's multi-purpose cooperative societies and widows got soft loans to improve their financial situation. Also, a one-day conference on the formation of women farmers' cooperative societies was organized by the office of the first Lady in conjunction with the State Ministry of Women Affairs, in which she challenged women farmers to rise up to modern agricultural technology.

She is ever ready to partner with any association that encourages education of women and the girl-child. She had pledged her unflinching loyalty and support to the Women Writers Association, as she started promoting reading culture through libraries in primary and secondary schools.

Mrs. Chief Servant had equally not shied away from women's participation in sports. She is a great supporter of the State female Soccer Development Committee in organizing the maiden edition of Hajiya Jummai Babangida Aliyu Inter-Local Government Competition.

She has equally encouraged greater women participation in politics through enlightenment campaigns on voters' registration. This has become necessary because the Talba administration is deeply interested in women participation in politics. Indeed, he has offered juicy appointments to women over time. They are not only Commissioners and Special Advisers; they are involved in different Committees. Women are also strong members of cooperative societies; Mrs. Aliyu has always sought to participate actively in mobilizing such women for effective delivery. She had reportedly said: "*the development of the State requires the involvement and contribution of women in every sphere*". This is the philosophy that has guided her actions thus far in the State.



**Chapter
Nine**

**ACCOUNTABILITY AND
TRANSPARENCY: DUE
PROCESS AND PPP AS
STRATEGIES OF GOOD
GOVERNANCE**



Governance is a serious business, thus leadership should be a compromise with accountability and transparency. Leadership is a people-oriented exercise which bears on the quality of truth, justice and fairness, with a view to recording great success in its drive to change the lives of the people. Democracy is a largely demanding experience, and it is equally expensive because of the high and diverse expectations at every sector of the polity. These expectations have to do with the standard of governance, public service, infrastructural facilities, rural development, private service, armed and unarmed forces, economic development and socio-cultural imperatives. It is expensive because of the large populace with the diverse needs, that must be met and because of the Local Government system which is in operation. Representations are supposed to be influenced by these diversities, and in a Federal system, the challenge is rather multi-faceted.

Development is not a narrow concept. If viewed holistically, it affects every sector of the polity. Governance is about rapid development in political, economic, cultural and social spheres and because all these centre on people, it boils down to the fact that

development plans have to be people oriented.

A people oriented development should be about building functional markets for the use of a providing employment opportunities for the young, providing infrastructural facilities in all rural areas; discouraging rural urban migration; and providing good education, health facilities, agriculture, social security, water and electricity, in order to provoke sense of investment. A progressive form of development will cover such aspects as industrial growth, intensive agriculture, availability of peace and stability in the polity, and effective national planning. Whatever that happens at the Federal level should equally occur in the States and Local Government Areas, and the wards level.

All these challenges of leadership easily call for acts of accountability and transparency. All principal serving officers have to be able to defend their actions at all times; their policies must be steeped in thorough respect for truth and equality; and they must be able to defend and protect the interests of the masses at all times. Also, planning must be seen to have taken place to achieve transparent results. Organization, prudence and courage to embrace challenges must be entrenched in the system. Public money must be well used, and the

tax system or regime must work well. Wastages have to be avoided. Sincerity and focus by the regime's functionaries will work against negative forces such as inflation and questionable deregulation of the economy. The accounting system will be transparent, and will not be jeopardized by selfish considerations. Defective attitudes as entrenched in the spirit of private accumulation, greed and selfishness, contracts inflation, scandalous un-productivity, absence of meritocracy, increasing poverty level, inefficiency, ethnic chauvinism, and absence of equity, will not happen. A transparent government will provoke spirit of openness, understanding, fair play and adequate record keeping for the sake of tomorrow.

When Dr. Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu (OON) became the Chief Servant of Niger State, he had all these in mind as shown in his inaugural speech. He outlined the problems of the previous administration in the State such as:

- (a) Political god-fatherism;
- (b) Financial indiscipline and fiscal recklessness;
- (c) Reckless contracts inflations and awards;
- (d) Misuse of banks' loans and facilities;
- (e) Absence of due process and accountability and
- (f) Absence of monitoring.

A repeat of these features would have meant rubbishing his administration. No wonder, he has since kept insisting that *“We will be exemplary in our leadership style and our standards of performance will be very high. Transparency and accountability will be our watchwords. We hope that each of our calculated steps will get us closer to our dream”* and that *“Let us together create an enduring culture of faith, devotion, contribution and support for the power State and make these our core values. As one people, we all must make worthwhile inputs into the Niger State re-invention projects, both for the sake of our generation and future generation...”* These assignments border on transparency and accountability. His vision is what he has not shied away from mentioning too:

“To transform Niger State into one of the top three State economies in Nigeria by the year 2020 being a model and leader in agro-based industrialization where there is employment and wealth creation opportunities for all in an atmosphere of peace”.

The mission of the regime has also remained unchanged: *“To empower Nigerlites by providing conducive environment for living, through wealth and*

employment creation opportunities in collaboration with development and public private partners". A regime with these lofty mission and vision cannot afford to lack transparency and accountability.

Aspects of the major thrusts of the reform agenda of the government clearly establish its obsession for transparency obsession of its socio-political concern. Part of it reads that the "*machinery of governance will be strengthened to achieve the goal of efficiency which is to enhance the performance of the economy in a transparent and accountable manner*", and that achieving this noble idea will mean working hard to change the dark fortunes of the civil service; security, law and order; budgeting, among others. The vision of the Civil Service is to "*be the Best Civil Service in Nigeria, in terms of professionalism, ethics and service delivery*". The service is "*to be reformed to serve as an engine for the transformational development of Niger State. The reformed Civil Service will be characterized by high levels of professionalism and technical performance in terms of efficiency, effectiveness and initiative with well trained staff that is knowledgeable and proactive; technocrats who are responsive to the aspirations of*

the Government and people; a committed people with integrity, fairness, impartiality and incorruptible; a crop of highly motivated and committed people; disciplined and politically impartial. Special focus will be on skills, qualification, competent effective deployment (square pegs in square holes), and training to upgrade performance, honesty and dedication to service. A reinvigorated civil service will subscribe to the goal of efficient service delivery, transparency and openness, sensitivity to cost of running government and empowerment to enforce civil service rules and financial regulations without fear. The reform will also include ways to reduce wastefulness such as providing benefits in kind. Benefits already abolished and monetized will not be reintroduced. Rather, the policy will be extended to cover the rest of the public service with appropriate exceptions. The issue of incentives will be addressed in an effort to motivate officers, sustain morale and retain good lards”.

The Civil Service example, among others, clearly spells out the reasons for the adoption of the strategy of transparency and accountability by the government. It even makes it clear that “the coordination of projects and programmes and the release of funds to them

(including projects under technical assistance funding) will be strengthened. A robust monitoring and evaluation (M & E) framework will be put in place to enable ministries and agencies track progress in the implementation processes". The concept of monitoring and evaluation are part of the transparency deal. Absence of this culture was what Talban Minna referred to in an interview published in "Africa Today" (Vol. 15, No. 4, April, 2009) to the effect that "people felt that governance was all about sharing public funds, doing things their own way". He had said further, to indicate the need for transparency in the polity:

When I took over, I took over with indebtedness, indebtedness to the point that some people could not be paid their gratuities for 10 years not to talk about pension. So I started by taking a loan to pay all those things. I am happy that I have been able to repay the loan. Many of the contracts given out were not given with the intention of doing the work. People felt it was their own share that was given to them. So I have many uncompleted projects. Many contractors have collected money for uncompleted projects. I did what I called 'debt verification', because people were coming to me asking me to pay them a debt that nobody recognized. Some of them said they were

given the contracts by words of mouth. We set up a committee to verify these debts. After the verification, out of a supposed to pay back some money to the State government. The people, instead of accepting that, went about saying they were not given opportunities to defend what they thought was their own right...we thought a Commission of Inquiry, which was more like a court, should be able to give us a definitive stand on the matter and we set up the commission and spent about one year doing the job. They had finished the job and are at the White Paper state. We understand that N13 billion should be paid back to the government. I am encapsulating that to show you where we were and many people were disenchanted with government. People lost confidence in government because in many places there were riots, burning of homes and people really had lost confidence in governance...

We have quoted the Chief Servant for obvious reason: to prove that his pursuit of accountability and transparency is for the good of the masses; it is a commitment to a return to political sanity and strong desire for development. The Chief Servant is not being hypocritical in the choice of this pursuit; he has been

straight forward, sincere, committed and spurred by the cries of the masses, who have remained helplessly critical of the distasteful culture of waste, exploitation and greed perpetuated by the previous regime.

The establishment of the Niger State Budget Monitoring and Price Intelligence Unit (NSBMPIU) by the Chief Servant, Dr. Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu (OON), is one of the greatest econo-political decisions he has taken so far to further empower the power State, since coming to power. As he noted in a publication titled **Guidelines on Due Process and Economic Intelligence**, the establishment of NSBMPIU is "to stem the open abuses to rules, regulations and standards in the award and execution of public contracts in Niger State. The abuses were evident in over-invoicing, inflation of contract costs, proliferation of white-elephant projects and diversion of public funds through all kinds of manipulations of the contract system. I am, however, convinced that the establishment of the Budget Implementation, Monitoring and Price Intelligence Unit in the State will substantially reduce abuses and result in savings in the cost of capital projects and introduce sanity in the system". He sees the coming of NSBMPIU as a timely and progressive development because it is

meant to serve as a big check against the contractual abnormalities of past regimes, and as a solid foundation for the envisaged programmes of development of the present one. The system which had been in existence before now was grossly faulty which was why there was "the abandonment of government projects after huge sums of money have been paid out to contractors from public fund. Above all, it brought about large scale corruption, poor service delivery, poverty and outright denial of social amenities to the people. All these combine to erode the confidence of the People in Governments, Governance and Leaders. Leaders should see themselves and serve the people as servants". The Chief Servant insists on the fact that the vision which informs its establishment is "to restore transparency, competition, competence, integrity and value for money in the award and execution of public contracts in the State" and it is meant "to restore openness competition, budgetary discipline, optimal costs and efficient projects implementation in well planned and coordinated framework".

The mechanism of the Due Process is a fundamental feature of his administration, and "an instrument for embracing transparency, competition, fairness,

integrity, openness, and value for money in procurement processes and procedures at all times". It should indeed have "a responsibility to enlighten, educate and provide adequate information to all categories of people; especially people who were beneficiaries of the old order, who clearly understand the multiple benefits of the Public Procurement Reform Policy but may choose to misinform, misrepresent or outrightly condemn genuine intentions of government in order to frustrate the idea. Nigerlites have a right to demand for quality service to be offered to them respectfully and with dignity". The vision of the programme is "to establish procurement systems driven by fiscal discipline and governed by a culture of accountability that proactively give value for money in Niger State". While its mission is "to restore and sustain procedures, systems and practices anchored on transparency, integrity and competition", to quote the Chief Servant. In the past, the situation was different. It degraded the sense of administration in the State, and crippled efforts at development in the past and opened up opportunities for mass exploitation, greed and social indiscipline among the shady contractors who simply stole away the wealth of the State.

As for the PPP which stands for Public Private Partnership initiative, it is a strategy adopted by the Chief Servant to fast-track development at every level in the face of the dwindling finances from the federation accounts and the internally generated revenue. It is an alternative drive for infrastructural development and efficient service delivery.

Under this initiative, the private sector partners with the public sector for mutual benefits. And the truth is that the private sector in the State comprises the formal and informal sectors. The sector is dominated by informal sector activities such as petty trading, transportation, local art and craft, subsistence farming and low-scale animal production. The major sources of funding for these activities are personal savings and informal finances. Factor of productivity in this section is characteristically low and output varies widely with the vagaries of the weather. For the informal sector, the basic challenge is that of raising productivity in the short term so as to pave way for a more organized production structure to emerge in the medium to long term. The size of the organised private sector (formal) is small, highly concentrated in the few urban centres mainly Minna, Suleja, Kontagora, New

Bussa and Bida. The dominant activities in this sector are services, finance, insurance and general commerce.

Partnership between the public and private sectors has yielded dividends in the execution of some laudable projects which include the mass Housing Projects in Minna, Bida and Kontagora; the leasing of Badeggi Rice Mill, the Minna Solar energy Street lights projects, the Garam Model City, the Zuma Rock Tourist /Development Projects, the development of Industrial Layout at Garam and Suleja, the construction of additional block of hostels in the College of Education Minna and the provision of internet facilities for students registration at the college, among other projects.

The government is planning through the PPP, to collaborate with the Federal Government to achieve the dualization of Minna Suleja road, the development of Gurara International Tourist Centre, the Baro Ports, the Minna- Abuja Railway Network, the Zungeru and Gurara Hydro-Power Station Projects as well as Minna Modern Airport City. A three arm posh State house is being proposed for Niger State. It is meant to house the Executive, the Judiciary and Legislative arm of

government.

Conclusion

The new standardized form of contracting in Niger State which follows thorough due process has reduced drastically what the government hitherto paid for contracts. In other words, it has been able to achieve better value for its money. One of the indices of development is the derivation of value for money well spent in the service of the people. The due process unit has been able to achieve this.

It is instructive to note that the 21st century has thrown up several challenges and this has invariably changed the ways government does business. The Niger State government is peopled by highly exposed individuals who are in tune with the changing global fortunes of the times and are overtly aware that government can no longer fund its projects all the time, that it is not only the responsibility to cater to the welfare of the people, but that private enterprises can also contribute their quota to the general development of the society. The PPP idea borrows heavily from the latter summation. Public-Private Partnership is the synergy between the government and private

individuals or firms to provide goods and services. These provisions notwithstanding are paid for. For profit is the motive of entrepreneurs. However, the multiplier effect that stems from these synergies is enormous aside providing goods and services, it also provides paid employment and livelihood; above all, it leads to overall index of development thus increasing manifold not only the quality of life but breeds peace, tranquility and a general advancement of the society. In Minna, this has been demonstrated through the Gen. Wushishi 500 Flats and Talba 500 flats Housing Scheme which are nearing completion.

Indeed the civil servants and general public in Niger State and other Nigerians and foreigners alike who conduct businesses in Niger State have come to appreciate the fact that business is no longer as usual and have accepted.



**Chapter
Ten**

**ELECTORAL SUCCESSES
AND BEYOND THE
TRIBUNALS**





*Renovated One Block of 2 Classrooms
at Magiword in Lemu Ward*



Completed Ring Culvert at Madalla in Iku South 1 Ward



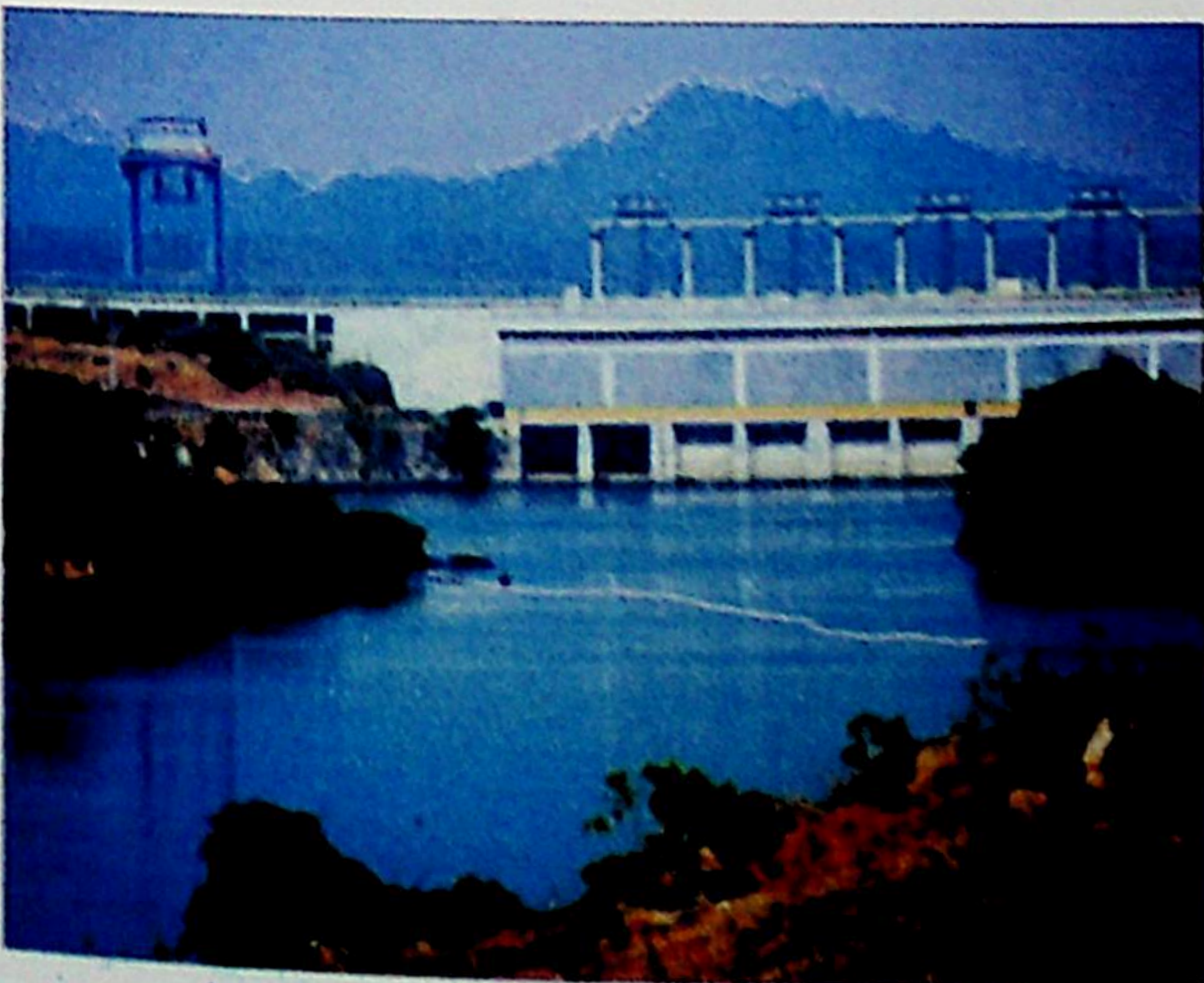
Constructed Convert at Gallah Ward



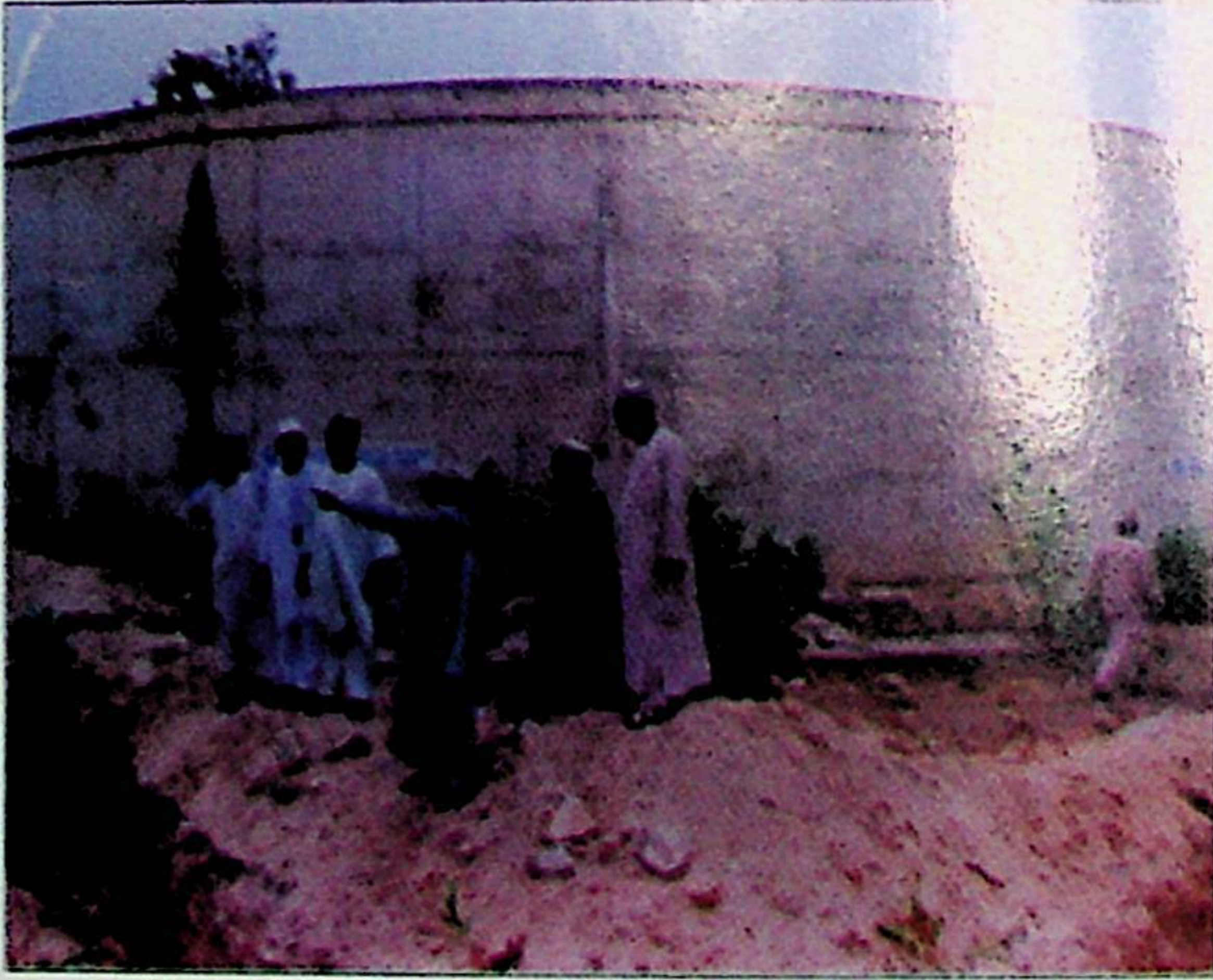
*Renovated 1 Block of 2 Classrooms, office; and
7 stores at Enagi Central Primary School*



*Construction of Culvert and drainage at Tunga in
Tudun-Wada North Ward*



*Jebba Hydro dam, one of the tourism attractions
in Niger State*



Due process team inspecting projects



Durbar for tourism development



Pottery small scale industry financed through loans granted through NAPEP



Underground water pipes for the distribution of water



*Newly constructed fuel dump provided by
Talba's administration at Minna Airport*



Ongoing construction work Ultra Modern Market



Grains procurement under Talba's food security programme





Reconstructed Murtala Amusement part



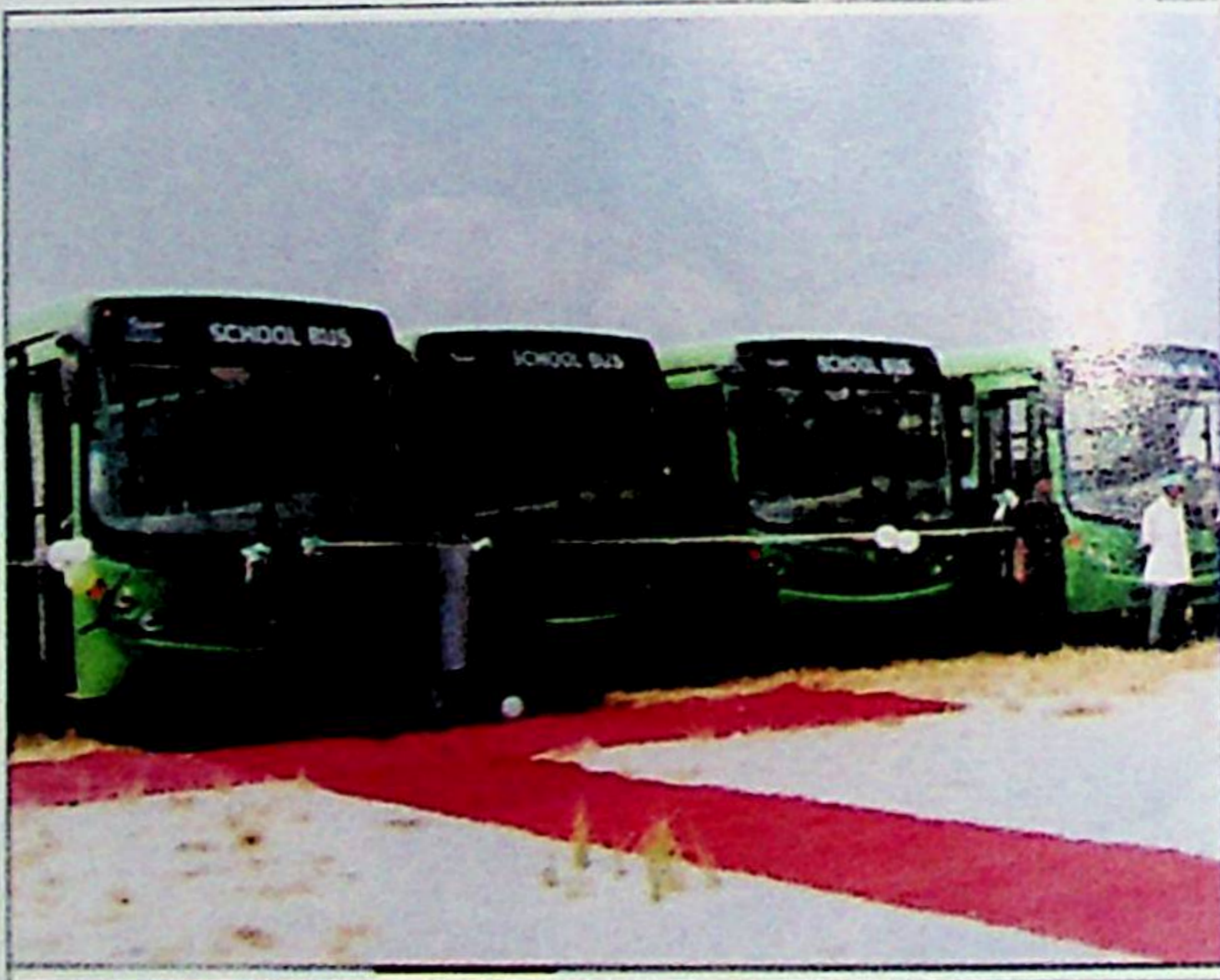
Sports Commissioner, Alh. Garba Mohammed presenting a trophy won by the state to Gov. M.B. Aliyu



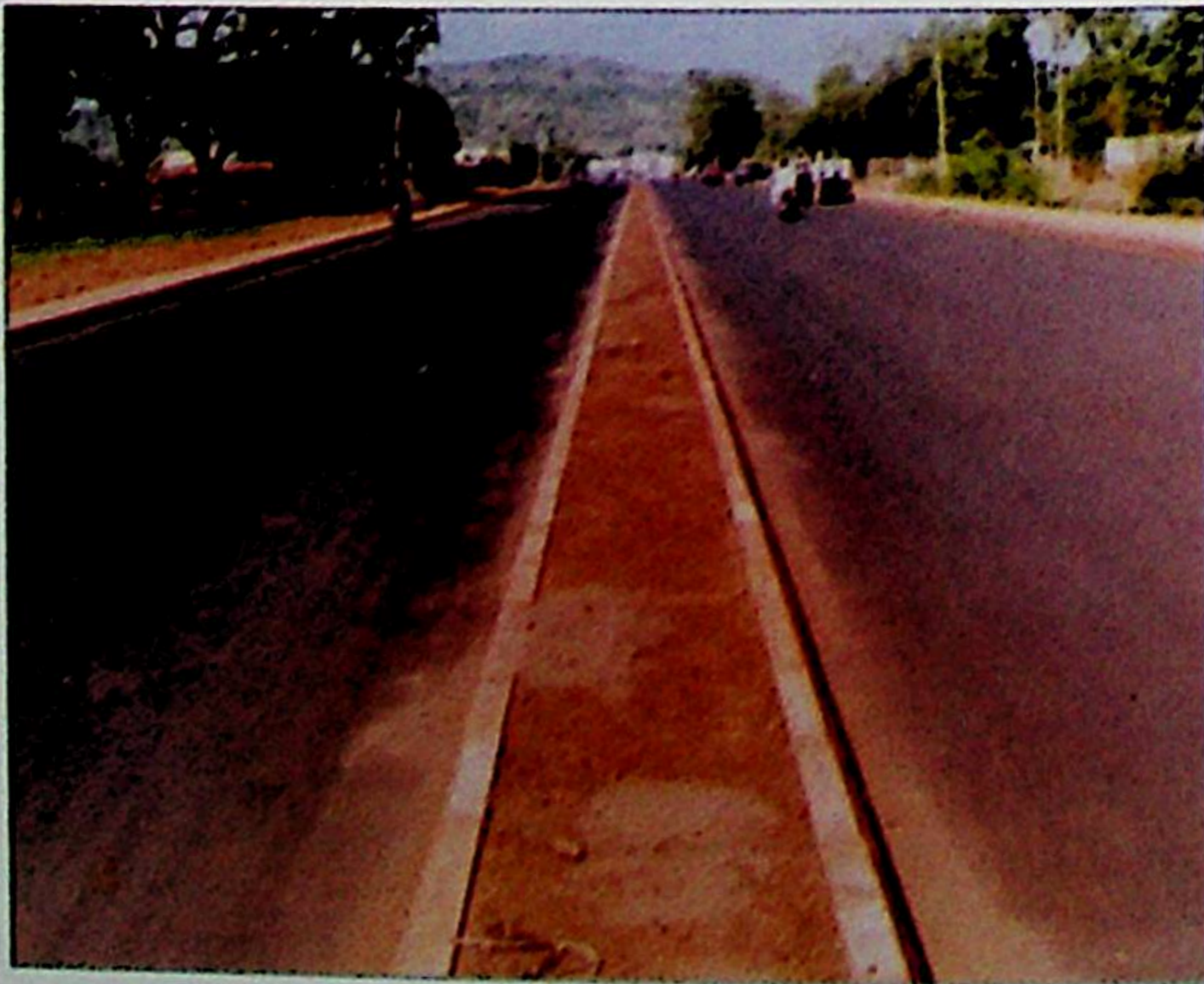
Vehicle to improve security in the state



Modern roundabout for beautification of Minna city



School buses procured by Niger State Government



Newly constructed government house road, Minna

On the 14th April, 2007, election for the exalted office of the governor of Niger State was held. Only eleven political parties were legitimately allowed to participate having fulfilled the basic electoral conditions laid down by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), a body charged with the arduous tasks of organizing gubernatorial elections and elections into the State's Houses of Assembly and the National Assembly.

At the end of the election which was adjudged free and fair, INEC declared the candidate of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), Dr. Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu, a former Permanent Secretary in the Federal Ministry of Transport, winner, having scored 443,754 votes to beat the candidate of the All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP), Barrister David Umaru, who scored 210,359 votes to come second.

The defeat of the ANPP candidate was applauded by Nigerlites, most of who overwhelmingly voted for Dr. Mu'azu Babangida particularly for his good track record in public service and his unequalled commitment to serve humanity in whatever capacity he may have found himself.

Expectedly, and as one of the features of participatory democracy, there was dissatisfaction with the outcomes of the elections by the candidate of the ANPP and his limited followership. On May 10, 2007, the ANPP candidate filed a petition at the Justice Sulyman Kawu led election Tribunal challenging the result of the election and the candidacy of Dr. Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu. He alleged in the suit that "the election of Dr. Babangida, the first respondent in the suit, was fraught with fundamental unconstitutionality and substantial irregularities. Secondly, he averred that the respondent was not qualified to be elected Governor of Niger State as at April 4, 2007 when the election took place".

In the particulars presented before the Tribunal by the Legal Counsel to the petitioner, David Umaru, it was averred that Dr. Mu'azu Babangida did not resign from the Federal Civil Service 30 days to the election contrary to the Constitution; that within 30 days preceding the election of April 14, Dr. Babangida performed official task in his capacity as a Public Servant; and that he had been indicted for fraud and embezzlement.

In their joint replies, the first respondent, Dr.

Babangida Aliyu and the second respondent, the PDP denied the claims. Even INEC and other other respondents who appeared before the Tribunal denied the alleged claims.

Perhaps on a more clearer note, the ANPP candidate told the Tribunal to determine whether Dr. Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu "lawfully resigned his employment with the Federal Civil Service at least 30 days from the date of the election, i.e. 14 April, 2007; whether the PDP candidate actually scored as many lawful votes as credited to him by INEC; and whether the Petitioner (i.e. Barrister David Umaru) did not score majority of lawful votes that entitled him to be returned as winner of the polls".

The Petitioner therefore, made the following prayers:

"That the election of Dr. Babangida as Governor of the State be nullified and in his place, he be declared as duly elected governor of the State or in the alternative, the gubernatorial election be nullified and a re-run election be organized for the remaining qualified candidates".

To sustain their case that Dr. Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu did not properly resign his appointment before

contesting the polls, the counsel to the Petitioner, Chief Mike Ahamba, SAN tendered several exhibits. They alleged that the letter of resignation which the first respondent, Dr. Mu'azu Babangida wrote, was directed to the Office of the Head of Service of the Federation, which has no competence to approve retirement, instead of the Federal Civil Service Commission. They also alleged that the respondent was paid his February salary, a claim which they believed, was convincing enough to prove that the respondent did not resign his appointment before contesting the election.

Also worthy of note were the several evidences tendered by the Counsel to the Petitioner to rubbish the credibility of the election in eleven local government areas of the State. These local government areas are Agaie, Bida, Edati, Gbako, Katcha, Lapai, Lavun, Rijau, Magama, Mokwa, and Wushishi.

However, the respondent, not deterred by the unfounded claims, had to counter them, through his Counsel, Mr. Ayodele, SAN. The Counsel observed that "the minutes of the meeting harped upon by the petitioners to prove that Dr. Babangida was still active in office, contrary to his claims, was unsigned by the Chairman, Secretary or even the maker called as a

witness. And in law any signed document is a "worthless document and of no probative value".

The Counsel also argued that unless it could be proved to have been induced (which of course, was not the case), the election of Dr. Babangida as the Executive Governor of Niger State cannot be nullified on the basis of mere allegations of non-compliance with the provisions of the Electoral Act, the Constitution and the Manual for Electoral Act. The Counsel further argued that, "*where it is alleged that a party acted through an agent to commit corrupt practices, and then it must be shown that such agents acted by the authority of the respondents*".

The Counsel also argued that the elections in eleven local government areas of the State were not marred by irregularities as claimed by the Petitioners. He also submitted that: "what the Petitioners rely upon as acts of non-compliance, such as multiple registrations, double voting, voting by under-aged persons, recording of false figures, are nothing more than allegations of crime, which in effect, the petitioners have severed from their petition.

"The various alleged acts of non-compliance

against Polling Clerks and Presiding Officers cannot be properly adjudicated upon by the tribunal in view of the failure to join those officers as parties in the petition as to do otherwise will be in breach of fair hearing provisions of Section 36 of the 1999 Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria [CFRN]. Although the petitioner provided a mass of evidence in an attempt to establish his case that Dr. Babangida was not duly returned by a majority of lawful votes, he did not "tie them up with specific averments in the petition", an act, which in the opinion of the respondent's counsel, fatally consigned the Petition to failures".

Throughout the trial, the respondents did not lead any evidence. Rather, legal strategies were used to rest their cases on that of the petitioners. Justice Sulyman Akawu, explained the relevance of the strategy in his final Judgment: *The legal strategy of resting the case of the defendant on that of the plaintiff will be a wise and profitable course only where the case of the plaintiff is manifestly weak either in law or fact or both, i.e. the plaintiff has not made out a prima facie case to justify any answers or response from the defendant".*

Hon. Justice Sulyman Ka said: "Whichever way one looks at this petition, it must fail because it is fundamentally defective, not only in its conception, but also in the manner in which it was prosecuted. The petition is conceptually defective because election officials against whom several weighty allegations were made were not joined as parties. The prosecution of the petition is defective because the petitioners failed to call a single eye witness to the several acts of non-compliance and irregularities at the various polling units and at other stages of the election which they alleged in their petition".

Dr. Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu was therefore, declared the duly elected Governor of Niger State by the Chairman of the Tribunal, Justice Sulyman, having dismissed the petition:

"...we hold that the election to the office of the Governor of Niger state, held on the 14th day of April, 2007 was conducted in substantial compliance with the provisions of the Electoral Act, 2006, that 1st Respondent was qualified to contest that election and was duly returned as the winner by a majority of lawful votes cast at the election. We consequently order that the petition be and is hereby dismissed.

In a state broadcast on the outcome of the election petition, Dr. Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu said, as a mark of his faith in the judiciary and his belief in the rule of law: *“Today's verdict by the Niger State Elections Petition Tribunal confirming us as the genuine winners of the 14 April, 2007 Governorship Elections is therefore, a victory for democracy in Niger State and vindication of the judiciary as the defender of Nigeria's democracy. We note the boldness, courage and patriotism being displayed by the judiciary. We are confident that the judiciary shall continue to uphold, defend and enrich the growth of democracy in our society and polity”.*

The Appeal Court Verdict

Not deterred by his loss at the Tribunal, Barrister David Umaru proceeded to the Appeal Court, Abuja to challenge the verdict of the Tribunal. But once again, he lost his appeal petition on the ground that it was “statute barred”, meaning it “was originally filed at Minna Tribunal outside the 30 days permitted by the law.”

Right from the beginning, David Umaru's case suffered grave and fatal imperfections, which eventually destroyed it. “In fact, it was programmed to

self-destruct. For instance, although he joined INEC in the suit, he failed to join the Presiding Officers and other Polling Clerks, against whom several weighty allegations of electoral fraud had been levied, whose testimonies would be necessary and consequential. Even then, many of his agents who were on the ground and who witnessed the electoral malpractices that he complained about were not called as witnesses, and by severing allegations of crime from his petition, exhibits in the form of Form ECSA and Voter registers intended to prove over-voting, non-accreditation, non-stamping of forms, etc, become inadmissible. Indeed, in the entire trial process, the petitioner turned up only three witnesses, including himself, whose testimonies only qualified as hearsay, being not eye-witnesses of the events which he complained short-changed him of victory.”

The Justice of the court of appeal, Uwani Musa Abba Aji, in her ruling said:

“The Appellants/Cross Respondent by filing a petition one day outside the statutory period has resulted in fatal consequences to the petition. On the whole, it is our humble opinion that the petition filed on the 15th May, 2007 was filed on the 31st day and is

therefore statute barred. The Tribunal therefore, lacked the competence to entertain the petition. The trial and subsequent decision reached therein is therefore, a nullity. The interlocutory appeal has no foundation upon which it could stand. It is hereby dismissed. The cross appeal therefore, succeeds and it is hereby allowed. The petition filed on the 15th May, 2007 is hereby struck out for being incompetent and the appeal is also hereby dismissed. The return and declaration of the 1st Respondent, Dr. Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu, as the Governor of Niger State is hereby affirmed”.

Verdict Of The Court Of Appeal, Kaduna

Perhaps, in what looked seemingly a ploy to perpetuate the reign of terror in the State by unseating the Chief Servant, Dr. Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu, the former Permanent Secretary in the Niger State Ministry for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Alhaji Alhassan Gunna, proceeded to the Appeal Court, Kaduna to challenge the nomination of Dr. Babangida as PDP candidate and the Governor of Niger State.

But like the last verdict of the Court of Appeal, Abuja, the Court of Appeal Kaduna ruled in favour of Dr. Babangida as the duly elected candidate of the PDP

and the Governor of Niger State.

In fact “when the litigation was conceived, little did Gunna realize that it was a pipe dream orchestration to snatch the legitimate power of Governor Babangida”.

The collapse of his political adventure began with his involvement and full support of the last widely discredited administration. He had, as a Permanent Secretary, supported the administration in its efforts to prolong its tenure and underdevelop, the State.

Prior to when he was jilted by his party, there was dissatisfaction about his candidature among the people of the State. Aside from the fact that many Nigerlites doubted his credentials to effectively pilot the affairs of the State and move it forward, they felt that his choice to succeed the then governor was a well crafted attempt to install a government by proxy. In fact, many doubted that the reason for his selection was altruistic; many even feared that he could be easily manipulated by his 'boss' whose tenure had then expired.

The late hour arrest by the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC), after a supposed nomination by the PDP, finally destroyed his hopes. According to Muhammed Abubakar, a Writer and

Public Policy Analyst, "As it was, an EFCC ugly taint was not the best colour to wear into a gubernatorial contest. An indictment by the anti-graft agency, whether true or imagined, was an ill-omen that would bring the aspirant or the party no good. Despite these odious circumstances that took him out of the race, the man still awarded victory to himself. His self-acclaimed mandate was averse to the electorates' scrutiny and democracy.

The aspirant's appeal is now in the dustbin of history.

Why MBA Succeeded?

Aside the fact that the Chief Servant was overwhelmingly voted for in the elections due to the confidence they repose in him as a good leader, the Courts were definitely interested in an election that reflects voters' choice or nomination based on party's interest. No doubt, the freedom of interest is a prerequisite for election and the denial of such freedom is a murder of democracy.

In the main, the successes achieved by the Chief Servant were orchestrated by the fundamental defectiveness of the petitions and the manner in which they were prosecuted. See the verdicts in the

Appendix.

The victory of Dr. Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu at the polls was very clear. It was the people's victory, and the judgments were for the masses. The Judges applied the principles of rule of law which emphasise more on Justice.

The Administrator of the National Judicial Institute (NJI) Justice Umaru Eri sheds light on the essence of law:

“A changing society cannot accommodate a situation where the law no longer performs its desired goal since it is the law that serves as a fulcrum for political, economic and a social reality of a given polity...Law itself occupies a strategic position among what makes life really worth living”.

Apart from the application of basic legal rules/principles in determining the case against the Chief Servant, his support in the State has often been wholly declared; and this is because he staunchly defends what he believes are in the interest of the masses. In fact, every action of his to date, attests to his genuine concern for a new awakening of the State. Unwaveringly, he is very much passionate about the realization of the new Niger State dream. As many

Nigerlites averred, "he has rekindled our spirit to
grow..."

A motivational speaker, Mike Murdock once said: "When you love something, you give birth to extraordinary tenacity, determination and persistence." It was the love for the Chief Servant that therefore, gave birth to the tenacity and determination of the people to herald his victory at the polls.

To paraphrase William Shakespeare, "Some are born great, some achieve greatness and some have greatness thrust upon them. So are some people born leaders, some assume leadership while others have leadership bestowed on them."

But the Chief Servant was not only born great, he has had leadership bestowed on him by the people, who, he claims, possess the real power power to determine who leads them.

Before the election proper, one remarkable sign of victory for the Chief Servant was captured in the words of Usman Baba Ahmed, a writer and commentator: "The star was seen by so many Nigerlites as the best and unrivalled candidate. Unlike other candidates and politicians, he (Dr. Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu) remains

an action-packed individual who easily blends with his environment and who believes in promising little and delivering much. An unrepentant workaholic, he stood out as the best candidate of choice with unrivalled track record of selfless service for his community, State and the country at large”.

Viewed from a different perspective, the success of the Chief Servant at the polls was a success for the PDP, and the judicial successes were also judicial triumph for the party. As the most populous, credible and strongest party in Nigeria nay Africa, which humbles heavyweights, a defeat wouldn't have been conceived even by few confrontationists. Here in Niger State, as in other States, the popularity of the party, the acceptability, its efficient organizational pattern, is such that could make our dead political heroes and heroines' quake in their graves with jealousy and vexation.

Poetically therefore, the victory of the Chief Servant, nay the triumph of the PDP in the Niger State polls and at the Tribunal and Appeal Courts was a redemption song sang by the patriotic and noblest Nigerlites, and even most of those brought into thralldom by 'reigns of terror'. It was a sure recipe for socio-economic and

political stability of the State. It was indeed the awakening of the noblest, sweetest strains of Nigerlites. It was the safety of the banished, the promised restitution, the strength of hope, the heaven's glorious flashes, a tender whisper of freedom, a gracious calling to service and the fragrance of the flowers of hope. It was indeed the political elixir that has eluded the State for some years.

MBA's Firm Belief In The Rule Of Law.

Dr. Mu'azu Babangida's firm belief in the Rule of Law, which emphasizes on rights of individual: equality before the law, fair hearing in the law Courts and other rights, has been demonstrated in the way and manner he has been handling critical issues concerning the State and the people.

One aspect which has attracted public discourse was the setting up of the Mayaki Commission of Inquiry in February, 2008, to investigate contracts awarded by the immediate past government and the payments made between 29th May, 1999 and 29th May, 2007.

We note that corruption, expressed in mass looting of the State funds, loomed so large in the State that development was impeded. Many accusing fingers were pointed at notable public figures that supported

and abetted frauds championed by the State's helmsman. But all those who were invited by the nine-man Judicial Commission of Inquiry were given the opportunity to defend themselves in the spirit of the law.

In his speech to inaugurate the Commission, the Chief Servant had said: "We are gathered here today to demonstrate our resolve and determination to fight corruption in all facets, especially in the public services with a view to laying a solid foundation for the socio-economic growth and development of our State. There is no way we can attain greatness as a State with the high level of corruption, embezzlement, financial leakages and wastages that have become the order of the day in the recent past. By what we are doing today, we are also sending signal to all government officials that ours cannot be business as usual. There are processes and procedures in governance. There are rules and regulations guiding all governmental transactions. Whoever is in government to steal or embezzle government funds is free to leave us now. Do not do wrong things and claim that the governor or your boss has directed you do so..."

It was really embarrassing for the Chief Servant that immediately after his inauguration, many contractors, individuals and corporate organization began to present their claims of indebtedness of the State for contracts awarded between May 1999 and May 29, 2007. In his words, "the situation and that of the empty treasury we inherited gave us serious concern and forced us to take a bank loan of N4.2billion to pay May Salary and run the affairs of the State".

However, as a responsible government and to ensure fair hearing, he set up a debt verification committee to ascertain genuine claims and help government to resolve its debt obligations.

The verification team came up with 320 claims, worth N28billion and verified and accepted authenticated claims of N8billion and rejected unsubstantiated claims of N13.6billion, while it recommended the recovery of N1.5billion.

The commission was, however, mandated to investigate the Debt Verification Committee's Report as it related to contracts awarded by the immediate past administration, the person or persons to whom the contract was awarded, the person(s) that awarded it

and the terms of contract and the agreed period of execution.

The Commission was also mandated to look into the paid or outstanding amount vis-à-vis the level of work carried out; to identify the supervising Ministry, Department or Parastatals to see if public officers connived to falsify and aided the payment for work not carried out; to determine the genuineness, validity and amount of bank loans obtained by any of the local government councils between 2003 to May 29, 2007, and determine persons(s) against whom government could make claim of recovery; to apportion blame and recommend measures, including disciplinary action to be taken against any person(s) found culpable in the award and execution of such contracts; to determine whether the government was indebted to any person(s) or whether there were wastages, losses, malpractices, advantages before, during or after the execution of any contract; and lastly, to review the activities of the Ministry of Works, particularly the Department of Civil Engineering Services between May 1999 to May 2007, with respect to the total amount paid for 21 projects said to have been done.

The Commission, in its sittings, upheld the

principles of justice and fair play, in the determination of cases before it. It did not order for the arrest or detention of any witness. Rather, it allowed some witnesses to be represented by their Counsels who were free to cross-examine other witnesses testifying against their clients. Yet, it was mandatory for the witnesses to be present to tell the commission what they knew about the contracts. Many did appear. Some said they knew nothing about the contracts for which they were invited, and were allowed to go.

Prior to the end of the Commission's sitting, the Commission's Consultants' Expert Reports revealed that most Bills of Quantities (BOQ) from the Ministries were never estimated. A Quantity Surveyor leading other consultants to the commission, Mr. Aderemi Muraina said that the estimations in the BOQ had excess materials which bloated the cost of most contracts. Examples included the electrification of Mamba Village where 80 Low Tension (LT) poles, four High Tension (HT) poles, and their accessories plus strings were provided on the BOQ, but only 4 (LT) and five (HT) poles were utilized for the entire village from the connecting point; the construction of Maska-Wabi road and its culverts handled by Nasiha Construction

Company which was poorly executed as the laterite was not well compacted and no stabilization materials were provided by the contractor. The road collapsed within one year.

The consultants blamed the site engineers for the failure of drainage and roads constructed by the last administration. They said they ought to have ensured that they (drainages and roads) were reinforced by the contractors to avoid collapse after handover.

They further revealed that roads were usually designed to last, at least, for 15 years, but most of the roads in Niger State under review, had begun to deteriorate rapidly. They also attributed the deterioration to either the deliberate compromisation of standards by site Supervisors or lack of professional or technical wherewithal.

They discovered too, that, in some cases, the Supervisory Ministries awarded contracts without the prior knowledge of the final users, and that the contractors simply supplied equipment at variance with the specifications. For example, the eye operating microscope bought for the Minna General Hospital could not be installed or tested, because it was not

bought and supplied according to specification.

There were also revelations of obvious recklessness in contract awards by the government. Most contractors did not register with the State Tenders Board before processing their contract papers with the board. Yet, they were awarded series of contracts to the tune of millions. Also depicting the fraudulent nature of the regime was the revelation by the consultants that most of the contractors never paid the necessary fees, while all contracts awarded by the Office of the Chief of Staff, Government House, Minna, were free of tax and VAT deductions. Public properties were also found to have been sold to selected individuals without evaluation, at abysmal prices. For instance, the fertilizer stores at Bosso belonging to the Federal Government were bought by Abu Turab. The Lambata Fertilizer Stores were also sold, and funny enough, the buyers did not know the square metres of the land in which the stores were built. The Mokwa Cattle ranch was also sold.

When the Commission submitted its report, Nigerlites had their hopes raised in the belief that necessary adjustment would be made for some funds to be returned into the State coffers by those indicted, so

that development could be realized. The Commission's report was actually damning as it revealed areas of waste and financial recklessness of the previous regime, typified by the meaningless contracts given and which remained uncompleted, by companies without registration identity.

Carefully, names and positions of all the indicted people appeared in the report, and the amounts stolen and government items carted away. And time frame was established when the indicted culprits were expected to return materials and resources in their possession. This action has sent the right signals to all serving people in government that transparency and accountability are watchwords which are highly respected and cherished by the administration.



Chapter Eleven

MAKING THE MEDIA WORK AND ASSESSING GOVERNMENT'S PERFORMANCE



It was in the morning on Wednesday, May 30, 2007, a day after Dr. Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu was sworn in as Executive Governor of Niger State. The reporters were milling around the Council Chambers at the Government House, Minna. Of course, they were nosing for news. No journalist covering Government House would want to miss out on happenings there at that moment, then the ebullient Talba, accompanied by some of his aides, walked into the Chamber, sat down and called on the journalists.

“There is a new way of doing things here... there is nothing sacrosanct about the business of government”. Those were his words as he spoke directly to the pressmen, for the first time in his capacity as the Chief Servant of Niger State. He therefore, asked them to return to their Press Cabin and assured that henceforth, they would be briefed about decisions reached after every executive meeting.

True to his words, immediately after his meeting with some government officials, the reporters were briefed. Since then, that has been the pattern as the Commissioner for Information along with others whose portfolios are concerned with decisions reached at the

State Executive Council meeting, go to brief the journalists at the Press Cabin after every meeting, a clear departure from the past.

The media engagement and interface with this government has been very robust, as against the armchair disposition that existed before.

The unfettered access provided by government has been a key to much of the information that the media has provided even though, some undue advantage have been taken in some quarters to rubbish credibility of the administration but to no avail.

Certainly, a leader's policies and actions cannot be completely divorced from his personal qualities. Dr. Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu likes to talk. In the words of a childhood friend of his, "*He talks. He expresses himself very well. He is not timid. He is esoteric.*" Indeed, such a person at the helm of affairs can only make the media work.

The media apparatus inherited by the Chief Servant were not functioning optimally due to a long period of neglect. Determined to make a change in view of the role of the mass media in development on December 26, 2007, he set up a Media Management Advisory

Committee comprising seasoned media professionals from Niger State. The Committee which was headed by Mal. Muhammad Datti Usman was to advise the government on the best strategies to project, nurture, enhance goodwill and mutual understanding among the citizens by ensuring effective coverage of government programmes and activities. It was also to advise on the communication strategies to support government development programmes, the most effective mass media policy for the state as well as on the appropriate response to mass media insinuations. The Committee has since submitted its report and the Chief Servant has started acting on its recommendations.

One of the major steps the Chief Servant has taken in getting the media to function properly was the disbandment of the Niger State Media Corporation. This has given greater autonomy to the state owned media outfits, namely ***Newsline Newspapers***, ***Niger State Radio*** and the ***State Television***. The Executive Director of each medium now has greater freedom to operate. In contrast to what obtained in the recent past, ***Newsline Newspapers*** now practices advocacy journalism, writing editorials that border on government policies and different issues affecting the

society. Similarly, we now see back pages where the general public comments on government policies and actions by way of text messages.

Staff of the Media Organizations readily testified that the release of running costs has now become regular, compared to the recent past where they sometimes found it difficult to purchase stationery and diesel for their operations. Their promotion is now regular under the present dispensation.

Conscious of the importance of timely information and the role of the reporter in the communication chain, the Chief Servant has procured and distributed laptop computers with internet facilities to members of the Government House Press Crew as well as the Correspondents' Chapel. This has made it faster and easier for reporters to send stories to their different organizations online.

The Chief Servant has also spent over N200 million to construct a Minna Network Centre for the Nigerian Television Authority. Certainly, such steps are necessary in the transformational drive of Governor Aliyu encapsulated in the Vision 3:20:20. Information is power and development can only take place where people are adequately informed, can air their views and the State is put on the information super-high way. The Chief Servant is conscious of this.



**Chapter
Twelve**

**RE-BRANDING THE
CIVIL SERVICE**



“Our vision is to be the best civil service in Nigeria in terms of professionalism, ethics and service delivery”

“The best civil service in Nigeria, propelling a transformation of Niger State into one of the top three state economies in Nigeria by the year 2020”.
-office of the head of service

The above statements now adorn offices across Niger State. It is not boastful, or noisemaking. It is only a reflection of the new thinking, transformational mindedness and an indication of the focus which Dr. Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu has given the Niger State civil service since his assumption of office as Executive Governor two years ago.

The civil service is the engine room of every administration. Governance is like a chain, the civil service is part of that chain. Indeed, a chain is as good as its weakest link. No government can truly fulfill its purpose with a weak civil service.

It must be noted that the civil service which Governor Aliyu inherited was ill-equipped to meet the

challenges of modern day visionary governance. Morale was at its lowest ebb, occasioned by the fact that the state workforce was one of the lowest paid in the country. In addition to drudgery, operations of the civil service were steeped in the old and slow way. Official documents were photocopied at business centres with the attendant undue exposure of government secrets.

Regular promotion and training, key ingredient in effective service delivery, were lacking. In short, modern office tools like computers were grossly lacking in the service, which is symptomatic of the scant attention paid to this sector by previous administrations.

With a rich background in the civil service after serving at the highest level of his career at the Federal civil service, it was with ease that the Talban Minna diagnosed the ailments afflicting the work force; hence he embarked on a surgical operation.

The Chief Servant soon approved a 27 percent wage increase for the workers. He followed with the payment of backlog of salaries owed them. Ever since, payment of salaries has remained regular. This has served as a tonic to the work force. Taking it further, the governor

gave the civil servants what might perhaps go down as their greatest surprise when at the end of 2008, he paid them a 13- month salary bonus. No government has ever done that in the history of the state.

But motivating and transforming the civil service goes beyond addressing pay package. With his exposure and experience, the governor knows very well that it is only an ICT- compliant workforce that can serve as a useful catalyst in his vision 3: 2020, thus he was determined to ensure that the workers get the much - needed computer training to enhance their productivity. The first batch of workers that benefited from the e-training were officers on grade level 8 and above.

At the end of the training, participants were provided with computers at a 50 percent subsidized rate by the government. A total of 1,840 officers benefited from the first e- compliance training

There was also a four-day refresher workshop for civil servants on grade level 12. It was a National workshop on public service rules which the chief servant hosted.

Since permanent secretaries and directors are at the

head of policy formulation in the ministries, a two week retreat was organized for this top echelon. Participants were exposed to the challenges ahead in view of the governor's vision 3: 2020. The government used the outcome of the retreat in appointing new permanent secretaries as eight directors who came top in the examinations that followed the retreat got elevated, thereby injecting merit into such appointments.

In order to bridge the gap between permanent secretaries and directors as well as enhance career progression as a further incentive, the governor introduced grade level 17 as another level for directors at the end of 2008. So far, over 700 officers on directors cadre have received various trainings.

However, promotion to this new grade level will not be based on the old system of waiting period only. It is going to be through a competitive process. Already officers on grade level 15 and 16 have attended a retreated that was handled by the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria at the end of which they wrote an examination. Such examinations will constitute 70 percent of the criteria for promotion to grade level 17. Qualifications, conduct and others will now constitute the remaining 30 percent of the criteria. Thus only

those who score 60 percent and above will be eligible to become directors on grade level 17.

Further, as from the year 2010, all promotions in the civil service will be based on examinations. These measures are aimed at building confidence in the system and making the process of promotion competitive as against the old fashioned mere waiting period.

Being a widely traveled man who has worked with people from all walks of life in the course of his career, Governor Aliyu knows the effect of discriminatory policies on productivity. Hence, he has stopped the practice of appointing non-indigenes on contract basis in the State. For him, since the so-called non-indigenes are Nigerians offering valuable service to Niger state, they should be employed on permanent basis. Thus he directed that all those on contract appointment but desirous of converting to permanent employment should be allowed to do so. To facilitate the conversion process, he set up a committee.

In his transformation of the civil service, the chief servant also looked beyond those still in service. He has facilitated a functional and reliable pension

arrangement. On assumption of office, he paid an unprecedented over 10 year pension arrears. These are certainly measures that not only put smiles on the faces of the retired but also give the active workers hope for a happy post - service life.

Certainly, transforming the civil service is an on-going process. Thus far, however, one can say, without equivocation, that Niger State public service is buoyed up with the coming of Dr. Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu. He knows their needs; he knows their challenges. And he is carrying them along on his mission train. The government and the workforce are all servants of one master: the people of Niger State. That is Talba's belief.