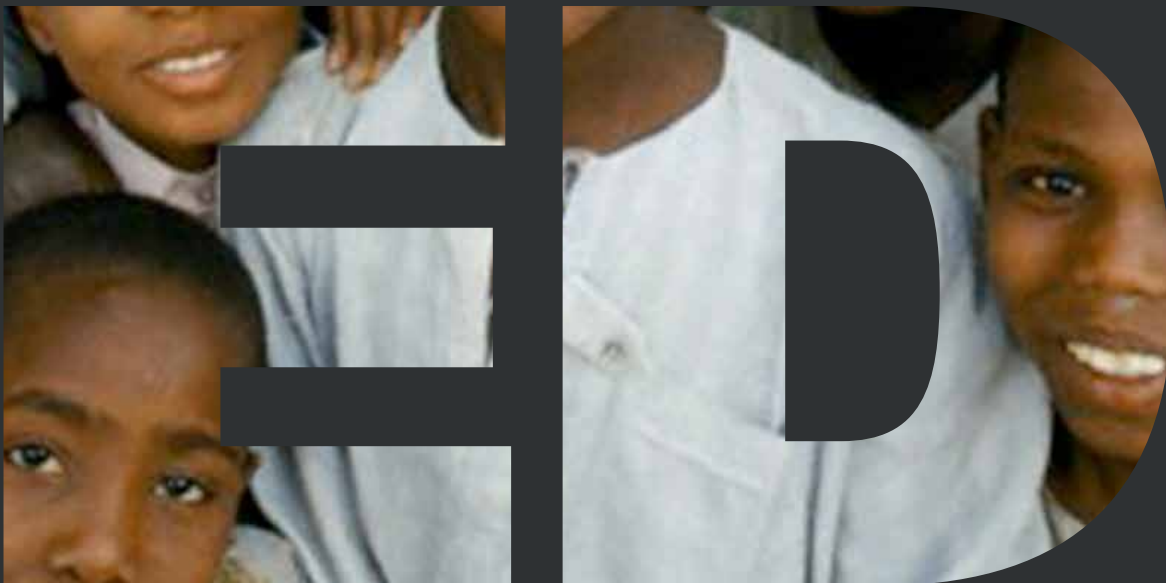




# We Stand



The Senator Abubakar  
Bukola Saraki Years



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**We Stand**

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**United  
We Stand**  
The Senator  
Abubakar Bukola  
Saraki Years



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**N**ow in its second decade, the Nigeria Governors' Forum has a long and rich history. I am proud to have played a role in that history – first as a member and then as Chairman.

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The Forum's leadership occupies a privileged position within the Nigerian political system – with one foot on the ground, dealing with the day-to-day economic and social issues facing Nigerians; but also with one foot in the door of national politics – able to influence national priorities, decisions and outcomes.

This dual perspective and double reach has been a key factor in the Forum's success, but also, importantly, its legitimacy as a national, and, I hope in the future, international institution representing a diverse but united Nigeria.

During my time as Chairman, the Forum underwent significant restructuring and resourcing to enable it to respond to both the contemporary and future needs of Governors and their constituents.

We reshaped the Forum from a one-dimensional and often lethargic body, into a multi-dimensional and proactive body, that engaged with national and local issues, and that enabled national and local politicians. We did this by appointing a new Director General – Asishana B. Okauru has played a pivotal role in the Forum and should be congratulated for his achievements and commitment. And we strengthened the policy development capacity of the Forum with support from the UK's Department for International Development. This along with a range of other international partnerships – such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation – allowed the Forum to reach new international audiences to the benefit of Governors and individual states.

We also introduced new initiatives such as the State Peer Review Mechanism, which allowed states to share and contrast best practice, whilst also introducing an element of competition between Governors. The economic focus of the Forum – particularly on increasing internally generated revenues, through creating an enabling environment for investment, more efficient administration of tax collection and the transformation of Inland Revenue Services – was also a big step forward in the Forum's influence and utility for Governors.



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“I believe the Forum's history shows us that diversity will be our strength.”

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However, as a medical doctor by training, what has had the greatest impact on me is the Forum's contribution to the progress Nigeria has made in eliminating polio. The Abuja Commitment, later followed by the Immunisation Leadership Challenge, was supported by the Forum and all thirty-six Governors, and played a determining role in the reduction of polio across Nigeria. Thousands have benefited from the willingness of Governors to work together and to understand that combined Nigeria is greater than the sum of its parts.

The ideas underpinning these reforms were in every case about action accompanied by accountability, and finding the appropriate balance between efficacy and transparency. As Nigeria enters a new economic phase and a tough fiscal climate, this balance, at times, will be difficult to find – but find it we must.

This book may be an account of the Forum's history, but its real purpose, and value, is in what it tells us about the shape and characteristics of Nigeria's future. I believe this future is one that will be defined by collaboration, and a deep sense of the collective. Nigeria will always be one of the most diverse nations on earth, but I believe the Forum's history shows us that that diversity will be our strength.

If we can learn from the lessons of the Forum – such as new models of partnership and governance; and embedding a new ethic of collaboration within our federal and local political systems – I believe we have reason to be optimistic about meeting the aspirations of all Nigerians, and, in particular, a burgeoning youth population.

Better governance often fails to capture the imagination of those who seek a better future for their families, friends and for themselves. What the Forum has demonstrated is that better governance can deliver real and tangible benefits for Nigerians – benefits that they can feel in their pockets, and see in their communities.

The Forum's future must be to continue to take bold and reforming steps forward, and build on its past successes; but, vitally, to connect its work with the aspirations and ambitions of our restless nation.



“The Forum’s future must be  
to continue to take bold and  
reforming steps forward, and  
build on its past successes...”

**Foreword** by Justice Muhammed Lawa Uwais,  
GCON, Former Chief Justice of Nigeria and  
Chairman SPRM Steering Committee



The Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF) is a coalition of all democratically elected Governors of the country's 36 States. It was established in 1999 to provide a platform for collaboration among all Governors, irrespective of party affiliation on issues of mutual interest. Since its inception, the Forum has had six chairmen.

The book "United We Stand: The Abubakar Bukola Saraki Years" chronicles developments in the Forum and the various initiatives embarked upon by the association as it strives to be the collective voice of the nation's governors when Senator (Dr.) Abubakar Bukola Saraki served as its Chairman from 2007 to 2011.

As documented in various parts of this book, the association had its most impactful years during his tenure. As a result of his remarkable foresight, he transformed the NGF.

From just an office servicing Governors to a policy hub akin to the National Governors Association (NGA) of America, the bipartisan organization of American Governors which was founded in 1908, as the collective voice of the nation's Governors and one of Washington, D.C.'s most respected public policy organizations.

A brilliant analysis and magnificent achievement, the book presents a wide range of initiatives embarked upon by the NGF including the First Retreat that took place in Abuja in 2007 to chart a new course towards effective and accountable governance in States; the polio eradication programme in collaboration with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; the Governors First Induction Programme in May 2011 to prepare newly elected and returning governors for the challenges of governance; and the inauguration of the States Peer Review Mechanism where Governors can compare notes on commendable practices which is unprecedented in any part of the world at the sub-national level. Incidentally, he is the Vice Chairman while I serve as Chairman of the Inaugural Steering Committee which was constituted by Rt. Hon. Rotimi Amaechi, the Governor of Rivers State that succeeded him as Chairman.

More importantly, he gave a new impetus to the institutionalization of the



organization with the establishment of a functioning Secretariat based in Abuja and the recruitment of competent management staff to run it.

The coffee book draws on a remarkable range of examples where Governors have diligently served the nation such as their intervention in the doctrine of necessity which brought the erstwhile Vice President Goodluck Jonathan to power and the conflict in Plateau State.

The book is distinguished by the relevance of its insight and the clarity of exposition. It is a compulsory read for all policy makers, development partners and all those interested in political developments in Nigeria and I recommend it highly.

Justice M. L. Uwais, GCON (Retired Chief Justice of Nigeria and Chairman, Steering Committee of the States Peer Review Mechanism).

## Introduction *by* A.B. Okauru Esq. Director General



2015 has been an historic year for Nigeria, its people and its political institutions. Our first truly contested democratic elections created a renewed sense of hope and optimism for Nigeria's future.

At a time when our nation's economic and financial security was under threat, the national elections presented an opportunity to set a new political and economic direction for our country, putting the security and aspirations of the many, before the interests of the few.

The challenges we face are widespread, deep-rooted and require both evidence-based, and imaginative policy solutions in equal measure. Governance that allows our diverse nation to work together, and systems that foster collaboration rather than separation, will be vital to meeting the challenges ahead.

The Nigeria Governors' Forum was established to play this very role. Acting as the missing mezzanine of governance in Nigeria, the NGF's original purpose was to enable Governors to come together, share best practice, and foster greater policy collaboration and political connectivity between states. The NGF has done this through the adoption of evidence-based and non-partisan policy research and development – placing policy efficacy before political expediency.

This book tells the story of arguably the most important part of the NGF's history. A period driven by the Chairmanship of Senator Bukola Saraki, this history represents a period of growth, impact and delivery for the NGF. Reimagined with a twenty-first century purpose in mind, the NGF was restructured to have a national footprint, working to deliver real and tangible change in partnership with Governors across Nigeria.

The book begins by tracing the emergence of Senator Saraki's Chairmanship and his initial work with the NGF. This was focused on a series of wide-ranging reforms designed to enable the NGF to play an even bigger role in policy formation and programme delivery. Through building the internal capacity and resource of the Forum and reaching out to new strategic partners and collaborators, the NGF

developed a new confidence in its ability to provide guidance and direction to state-level government.

Following this, the NGF appointed a new management team, led by Asishana B. Okauru as Director General, and entered a phase of productivity following its internal restructuring, and national tours across Nigeria. The new team quickly identified the need for a more activist approach to policymaking, providing steer and direction to national issues at across state-level government.

This account details the highly respected role that Senator Saraki and the NGF played in crisis resolution, including working with the teaching unions, as well as playing a pivotal role in developing and securing the Senate approval of the Doctrine of Necessity. Following the illness and subsequent death of President Umar Yar'adua, Nigeria faced political paralysis with uncertainty over who would be appointed to the Presidency of the Republic. The chapter outlining the Forum's role in overcoming this provides a compelling case study in finding consensus during times of great volatility.

Some of the biggest achievements of the Forum relate to policy development in the health sphere. Senator Saraki's role in developing new strategic partnerships with global organisations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, was fundamental in the development of the Forum's ability to fund and support programmes relating to polio eradication and routine immunisation. The Immunisation Leadership Challenge highlighted later in this book, in addition to the Abuja Commitment, was a pivotal programme delivered by the NGF, and played a significant role in the eradication of polio across Nigeria.

The book later goes on to describe the range of policies and initiatives that the NGF played in supporting local economic development, state-level revenue generation, and infrastructure investment and modernisation. Many of these policies are still in operation today, and are commonly used by Governors and state governments.

While this account of the NGF's role in policy development is central to understanding its impact, the key theme of the book, and central to demonstrating the success of the NGF under the Chairmanship of Senator Saraki, is the methodology and approach he adopted – arguably the fundamental driver for the NGF's success. Senator Saraki's



unique mixture of philosophy, purpose and personality allowed him, in partnership with individual Governors, to provide the perfectly pitched leadership that the NGF needed to take it from a talking shop to a policy think and do tank. The NGF became the missing piece of Nigeria's federal jigsaw, acting as an enabler and educator for Governors across the country.

The failure to understand the utility of procedure has been a key factor in the inability of national, state and local government to deliver a progressive and reforming agenda for Nigerians. This account of the NGF shows how the Forum and its partners valued process, and made better governance the cornerstone of its work.

By revisiting the NGF's recent history, and walking back through the footprints it has made in Nigeria's politics and economy, I hope we can help set a new path for Nigeria's future – one defined by collaboration, open and transparent governance, and an acute sense our responsibilities to one another.

The purpose of this book is to enable Governors and anyone with an interest in better policymaking and delivery, to carry out their duties more effectively. We believe this book is an inspiring best practice case study for Nigeria, and, perhaps even policy-makers across Africa. Indeed, we hope the NGF can play a defining role internationally in promoting Nigeria, and supporting its global partners.

The economic, social and security challenges Nigeria faces should not be underestimated – but neither should the resolve, courage and determination of Nigerians to meet these challenges.

The NGF's role supporting Nigeria's elected representatives, and acting as an enabler and engine for reform, is more important than ever. We hope that the case studies in this book can be utilised to act as coordinates for Nigeria's future.



# The Nigeria Governors' Forum From Conversation to Collaboration



## Background

The Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF) is a coalition of all democratically elected Governors of the country's 36 States. It was established in 1999 to provide a platform for collaboration among all Governors, irrespective of party affiliation on issues of mutual interest. Since its inception, the Forum has had six chairmen.

As set out in its Strategic Plan, its mission is to provide a common platform for collaboration among the governors on matters of public policy, to promote good governance and the sharing of good practice and to enhance cooperation at the state level and with other arms of government and society. In this way, it seeks to realise its vision to be an effective, proactive and inclusive non-partisan lobby group that fosters, promotes and sustains democratic values, good governance and sustainable development in Nigeria.

The NGF was formed in the knowledge that many of Nigeria's states had been created so as to pander to the whims of the country's leaders in the centre, for the most part military leaders. The states thus created were mere appendages of the centre. The many years of military rule worsened this situation, resulting in a very powerful centre dictating practically everything within the context of the federation.

It became expedient and imperative for states to assert themselves. The need to collectively and positively influence the nature and course of policies at the national level informed the philosophy behind the creation of the Forum. There was every need for states once again to assert themselves, to exercise the level of independence appropriate of credible units in a true federation, thereby removing the manifest distortion that militated against the realisation of true federalism.

After Nigeria's return to democratic governance in 1999, a multi-party conference of all 36 democratically elected state governors was held in Abuja. The conference was organised by the National Democratic Institute (NDI), a US-based organisation that provides practical assistance to civic and political leaders advancing democratic values, practices and constitutions across the world. It was here that the Nigeria Governors'



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Forum was born, inspired by the American National Governors Association and facilitated by the NDI and the Canada-based Forum of Federations, with the then governor of Nasarawa State, Alhaji (Dr) Abdullahi Adamu, as its first chairman. There was little fanfare for the inauguration of the Forum but it turned out to be a landmark event uplifting Nigeria's federal democracy.

When Nigeria attained independence from Britain in 1960, it had only three regions. The federation moved from this initial three-region structure to a four-region structure by 1964, and it now has a 36-state structure, including 774 local governments. These changes were necessitated by the need for a balanced federation that would fairly represent all nationalities. However, they also increased imbalances in the Nigerian federation, as exemplified in the continued centralization and concentration of power at the centre with a defective federal structure made worse by many years of military rule.

In principle, the NGF was a powerful platform that would bring governors together and unite them in a common course. In reality, it failed to live up to this potential. It lacked clear direction in its early years; and although acknowledged as a useful institution, it did not have the impact on policy that it had first promised. It was more of a forum for discussion than action, and members rarely attended its meetings. Despite this, the NGF remained a powerful entity. All it required was the right leader to pull together the strands of potential into a united force for promoting good governance and federal democracy.

## The Emergence of Dr Saraki's Chairmanship



“He brought positive, radical changes into the Forum. It became a formidable decision-maker... The NGF has done well in carrying the governors along.” *Mahmud Shinkafi, Governor of Zamfara State, 2007-2011*

“A governor of governors.”

*Dr (Mrs) N.N. Akanbi, Ambassador, Embassy of Nigeria, The Hague, The Netherlands*

All those who worked with Dr Abubakar Bukola Saraki in a professional capacity observed his qualities as a strategic thinker, astute planner, pragmatic achiever and firm but fair leader. These strengths were also clear to his fellow members of the Nigeria Governors' Forum.

It was no surprise when he sought to become Chairman of the Forum in 2007. And, more important, there was no opposition among the other governors. The transition was smooth in many ways. Dr Saraki had worked closely with Chief Lucky Igbinedion throughout his chairmanship; and being from the same party, they already enjoyed a good relationship. Also, the Forum then had very few formal rules, no effective secretariat and a minimum of processes. Dr Saraki was fully prepared and ready to initiate the plans he had for the Forum, to transform it from a passive talking shop to an active platform for driving change.

An important part of his leadership lay in inspiring his colleagues with a strong sense of belonging to the NGF and of their important role in Nigeria and its future. Their commitment to the Forum rose steeply and its meetings became well attended.

## The Secretariat

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### Restructuring

“I felt this Forum could be used more positively and have more impact on our people, both at the state and national levels. There was a need for more resources, for the Forum to act as a foundation of knowledge and wisdom and something that could be of value to the governors.” *Dr Abubakar Bukola Saraki, Former Chairman, NGF*



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As soon as Dr Saraki became Chairman, he set about reforming the NGF. Having been the governor of Kwara State since 2003, he already knew what he wanted to achieve. There had been much criticism that the Forum was about governors tussling for power and about politics and that it had nothing to do with empowering the people or developing the states or the nation. Dr Saraki recognised the need for more resources so that the Forum could convert its collective wisdom and experience into tangible actions with beneficial results for the country. And to do that, a proper secretariat had to be put in place with competent people channeling consensus through a technical and administrative division focused entirely on delivery.

As part of the Forum's resolve to ensure that the NGF Secretariat was properly institutionalized, a new management was appointed in January 2009 under the leadership of Asishana B. Okauru as Director General (DG). The recruitment of the DG was through an open and very competitive process, which first involved setting up a panel to handle recruitment, something novel to the NGF. At that point, Mr Okauru was still in the service of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). This caused consternation among the governors, as the EFCC then had cases against some governors over perceived financial recklessness. When Mr Okauru was proposed to the governors at the Forum, they took some persuading that there was no hidden agenda and that Mr Okauru was simply the most qualified candidate. The new DG's role was to be the chief executive officer, responsible for crafting policies, managing the Secretariat and being its administrative head.

Its new model followed the organisational structure of America's National Governors Association (NGA), whose members have much more input into policy matters because of their cohesiveness. To help achieve this, two departments were set up: the Research and Strategy Department and the Finance and Administration Department, each headed by two executive directors. The Executive Director of Finance and Administration's role is to provide oversight of human resources, payroll, recruitment, capacity-building and all other corporate services of the Secretariat. The Executive Director of Research and Strategy's role is to have oversight of strategy and research and policy issues. It was then decided at the top level that there was a need to define clearly the Forum's vision, mission and common purpose. Experts were brought in as staff members to deepen the Secretariat's knowledge base.



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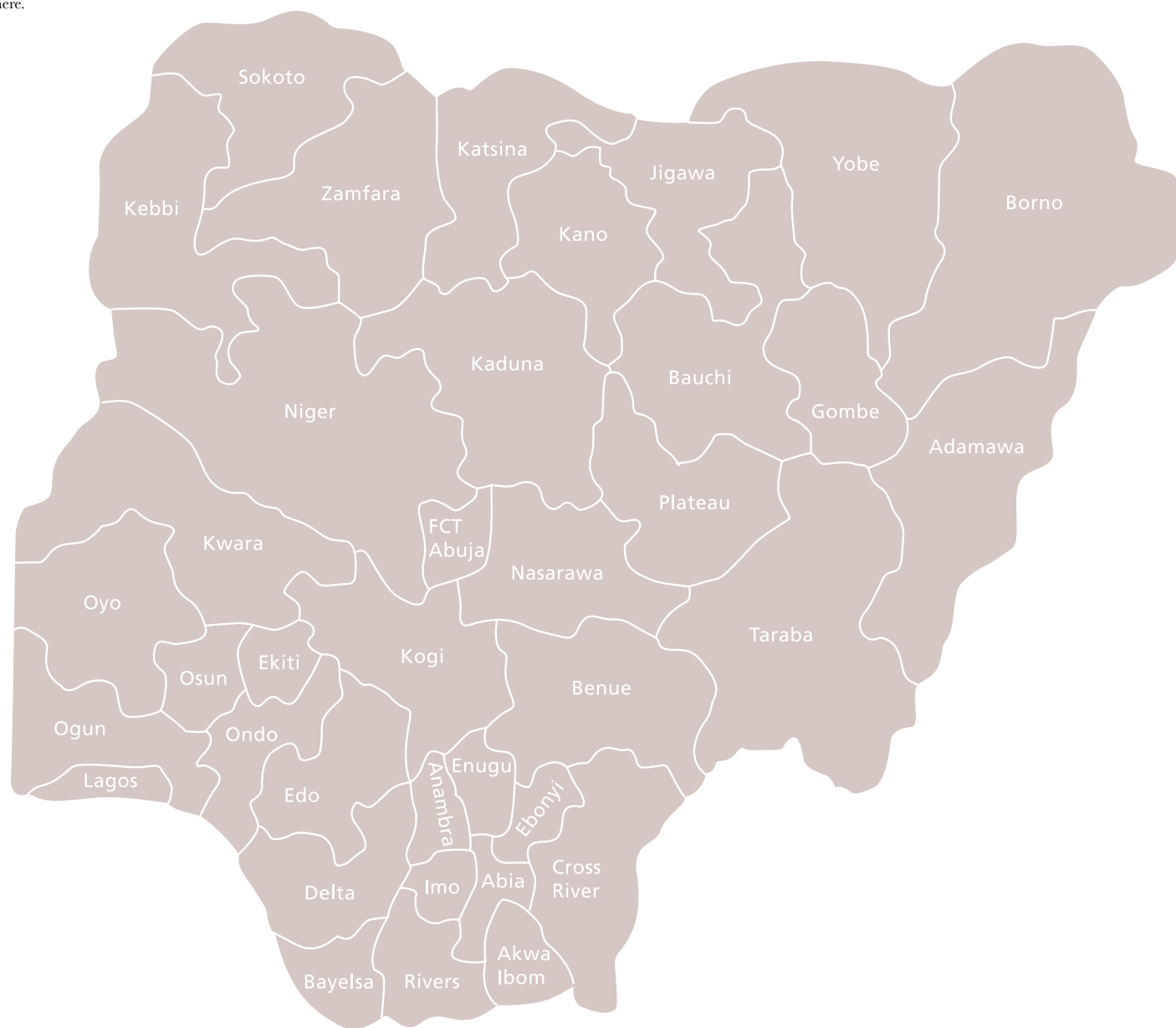
The new DG immediately identified the need for external support and pursued a strong collaboration with the NGA. In May 2009, acting on the advice of Dr Saraki, Mr Okauru initiated a programme in which the Forum delegated six of its members to visit their counterparts in the US for two weeks, a visit for sharing experience, for capacity-building and for observing first-hand the workings of a mature democracy.

**This exercise kick-started a number of initiatives that fed into the Forum's policy arm. With the assistance of the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) and its State Partnership for Accountability, Responsiveness and Capability (SPARC) programme, technical advisory units were established in the Secretariat to deepen the support provided to state governors. These units included Policy Advisory, Knowledge Management, the State Peer Review Mechanism, Economic, and Public Financial Management.**

The Secretariat also deepened its relationship with a number of stakeholders, including ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) and other international development partners.

There was as well a need to build capacity at the subnational level for the purpose of promoting good governance. This required direct training for the various key policy officers and desk officers in the states and holding workshops and conferences for the governors themselves. It was decided that officers from the various states should be brought together in order to share ideas about how planned activities could be implemented.

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### Tour of States

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“Contrary to public perception, governance was indeed happening in the states.”

*Mallam Mohamed Jibia, Executive Director, Finance and Administration, NGF*

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The Secretariat embarked on a comprehensive data-gathering tour of all 36 states in order to seek credible and reliable data for policymaking and for effectively connecting with its principals. The tour was also an opportunity to learn about the states and to identify and connect with the leading figures of various state organisations. Resources gathered included audio-visual materials, human resources data, project and strategy frameworks and best practice. Another outcome of the tour was a robust library of information on all states amassed by the NGF Secretariat as well as knowledge of and access to the networks of officials and institutions around the state governors.

The Secretariat concluded that development activities were taking place in the states that were not being flagged in the public domain and that it wanted them to be shared more widely. “A lot was happening in all the states that was not reported. The trip gave us an opportunity to document the findings,” commented Otunba L. O. T. Shittu, Executive Director for Strategy and Research at the NGF.

What was immediately apparent and, to some, surprising was that various states were doing a number of things very well. From infrastructure development to innovation in education, health and agriculture, giant strides were being made in socio-economic improvement. But the tour also identified challenges common to all states: unsatisfactory time management; a faulty feedback mechanism; and poor support capacity for governors.

The result of the tour was a document that collated all the findings and subsequently set the tone for the comprehensive State Peer Review Mechanism (SPRM) that the Forum adopted.



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The release of ECA funds to the states, which was so desperately needed during the global recession in 2008, was largely due to the intervention of the NGF

### Excess Crude Oil Funds

As one of the world's largest producers of oil, Nigeria relies heavily on petroleum exports: they make up roughly 90 percent of its foreign earnings and 80 percent of government revenue. As a result, its economy is particularly susceptible to shifts in the price of oil. This was the main reason why the Excess Crude Account (ECA) was set up – in essence, to protect planned budgets against shortfalls caused by the volatile market. The ECA, also known as the Stabilisation Account, was created in 2004 as part of reform programmes led by President Olusegun Obasanjo to liquidate much of the country's external debt. The NGF argued that this was unconstitutional and that monies accruing to the federal government should have been distributed across the tiers of government.

Owing to the cordial relationship between the NGF under Dr Saraki's leadership and the presidency, funds were released to the states a number of times over the next three years. This practice continued when Goodluck Jonathan became president in 2010. According to Governor Babatunde Fashola of Lagos State, the proceeds from extractive resources ought to be invested in long-term assets, particularly infrastructure. The release of ECA funds to the states, which was so desperately needed during the global recession in 2008, was largely due to the intervention of the NGF. The Excess Crude Account, which reached US\$22 billion by the last quarter of 2008, was then used successfully to finance a stimulus package in 2009 that insulated the Nigerian economy to a large degree from the world economic crisis.

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### The Federation Account Allocation Committee

The Federation Account Allocation Committee (FAAC) comprises all 36 states' commissioners of finance and their accountants-general and it is headed by the minister of state for finance. Other members are the revenue-generating agencies of the federal government such as the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation, the Federal Inland Revenue Service and the Nigeria Customs Service. The FAAC meets once a month; and at those meetings, money is allocated to states from the Federation Account in accordance with the constitution of Nigeria. This money is allocated to states so that they can meet their budgetary needs to deliver development and public services. It became normal practice that when the Federation Account Allocation fell short of their needs, the excess crude funds would be used to augment the shortfall. Through Dr Saraki's efforts, the NGF was accorded observer status at the monthly FAAC meetings, thereby enabling the Secretariat to collate and analyse data for the 36 States.

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### The Sovereign Wealth Fund

Due to the nature of Nigeria's Federalism, National savings has been a contentious issue among the different tiers of government in Nigeria. The promulgation of the Nigeria Sovereign Investment Authority Act, 2011, establishing the Nigerian Sovereign Wealth Fund did not initially enjoy the support of governors as they were isolated from the processes. Moreover, the Fund was expected to replace the excess crude account, which governors felt was unconstitutional. Through the intervention of Dr Saraki, the Federal Ministry of Finance was able to convince governors for the passage of the Act.



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### Domestication of the Fiscal Responsibility Act (2007) and the Public Procurement Act 2007 at the State Level

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Public procurement has been very challenging in Nigeria. This is attested to by the World Bank Country Procurement Assessment survey, conducted in 1999, which established a clear link between weak public procurement procedures and corruption. It also identified the far-reaching negative consequences formational development, especially in the area of infrastructure development. Poor procurement is driven largely by inflation in contract costs, lack of procurement plans, poor project prioritisation, poor budgeting processes and lack of competition.

In response, the federal government initiated its economic reform agenda, which included the Public Procurement Reform programme, as set out in the Public Procurement Act designed to restore proper procurement processes, and the Fiscal Responsibility Act forensuring macroeconomic stability through greater accountability and transparency.

The Nigeria Governors' Forum, a leading voice in the domestication of both bills, put its collective weight behind these timely economic reforms. And once they were passed, the Forum constituted a committee of attorneys general from all the states to examine the Acts as a prelude to passing their state equivalents. Many States have since passed these bills and the remaining are 'on track' to do so.

Development Partners showed keen interest in the passage and implementation of these bills and committed themselves to assisting the states in passing and implementing them. As a result of their interest, a multilateral memorandum of understanding (MoU) on adopting and implementing the bills was signed between the NGF Secretariat and the African Development Bank, the European Union, the Canadian International Development Agency, the Japan International Corporation Agency, the UK's DFID, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the World Bank in collaboration with Nigerian stakeholders, the Federal Ministry of Finance and the Debt Management Office of Nigeria.

It was the job of the Secretariat to ensure that the various institutions required to rollout the bills were established at state level – essentially to create an institutional framework for implementation. This involved training state officials by way of workshops and conferences that instructed them in the processes required to set up their own public procurement offices. The NGF monitored progress through the Secretariat, as it was crucial to make sure that the bills were being shaped according to the needs of the states.

## Crisis-resolution



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A major objective of the Nigeria Governors' Forum is to play a significant role in dispute-resolution at the national, state and local government levels. One of Dr Saraki's strengths was his skill in achieving consensus. This skill earned the NGF a reputation for the effective negotiation and settlement of disputes.

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### The National Union of Teachers Strike

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In June 2008, Nigerian teachers, led by the National Union of Teachers (NUT), went on strike to back up their recurring demand for a formal teachers' salary scale (TSS). President Olusegun Obasanjo had agreed in 2003 to the implementation of the TSS but as of 2008, it had remained unsigned.

The intervention of the NGF in 2008 was pivotal in resolving the crisis and averting further strike action. The NGF was also involved in resolving further strike action by the NUT a year later caused by the states' failure to implement the TSS.

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### The Plateau State Crisis

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The Forum was also involved in resolving the crisis in Plateau State. Since 2001, the state has witnessed persistent settler-indigene conflict over claim to resources, land and power. This crisis between January and March 2010, resulted in about 1,000 fatalities, the displacement of about 500 persons and massive destruction of property. A delegation of governors led by its Chairman, Dr Saraki, visited the affected areas in an effort to learn first hand the nature of the crisis and commiserate with the governor. Following this visit, the NGF constituted a committee to review the immediate and remote causes of the crisis and proffer recommendations. Members also made financial contributions towards providing relief to the displaced.

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“Perhaps the greatest achievement of the Forum in keeping Nigeria together was the Doctrine of Necessity.” *Asishana Okauru, Director General, NGF*

“Many people give credit to the National Assembly for so many things, but even the Doctrine of Necessity started from the NGF.”

*Dr Mu’azu Babangida Aliyu, Governor of Niger State, 2007–2015*

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## The Doctrine of Necessity: The Role of the NGF

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A major achievement of the Nigeria Governors’ Forum was its successful intervention in the assumption of power by the then vice-president Goodluck Jonathan when a constitutional crisis ensued.

In 2009, President Umar Yar’Adua was indisposed and had to be flown abroad when he could not execute his duties. The country practically grounded to a halt. For the vice-president to succeed the president, the constitution provides that the president ought to transmit a letter to the National Assembly indicating that he would be unable to discharge his functions as president for a period and that in his absence, the vice-president would act as president.

With the country drifting towards anarchy and with almost no form of governance and leadership at the centre, Dr Saraki stepped in and worked with the National Assembly to produce a well-thought-out resolution to restore stability. They devised the Doctrine of Necessity, which was passed by the National Assembly with the NGF working all-out behind the scenes to push it through over one long night. In essence, the Doctrine of Necessity allows the vice-president to take over as the acting president until the president returns. And it was the action of the NGF in urging the National Assembly to rise to the challenge that made sure it became law. It was one of the greatest moments in the NGF’s history, and especially for Dr Saraki.

## From Minor Player to Champion



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### Polio Eradication and Routine Immunisation

“Let me close by making an appeal on polio. You have made tremendous progress in the past year. Polio cases are down by 95 per cent. But if we let our guard down for a minute, polio can spring back. We cannot let this happen. Let us eradicate this crippling disease once and for all.”

*UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at a breakfast meeting with the NGF in 2011*



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Ban Ki-moon was deeply impressed by how Nigeria had taken great strides towards the complete eradication of polio and was keen to ensure that progress continued.

These achievements have indeed been hugely significant. Nigeria has had a chequered history in polio eradication. In 1997, the National Programme on Immunisation (NPI) began operating as the stand-alone initiative to bring vaccines to Nigeria. Prior to this, the ministries of health at the federal and state levels and the departments of health at the local government area (LGA) level had been responsible for providing a reliable and sustainable routine immunisation programme for the country. Commendable progress had been made through these channels: more than 80 per cent vaccination coverage of children was achieved on a regular basis.

The creation of the NPI, contrary to expectations, did not achieve the desired objective. It experienced poor leadership and staff shortages and its programme delivery was unsatisfactory. Little improvement was seen in the eradication of polio. The annual number of reported cases averaged 504 between 1994 and 2007, with peaks in 1999 (981 cases), 2005 (831 cases) and 2006 (1,143 cases).

The NGF was visited in February 2009 by Bill Gates, Head of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The Foundation was involved in the global campaign against polio; and

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in this visit, he secured the commitment of the 36 governors to collectively wage war against polio and advance immunisation. This pledge has since become known as the Abuja Commitment. In it they pledge to eradicate polio by:

- 1. Providing active leadership of polio eradication activities, including routine immunisation, and primary health care in the states and directing LGA chairmen to ensure that all children under five are reached and vaccinated during any polio eradication activity in states;*
- 2. Improving operational quality at the LGA level in states by chairing quarterly meetings with all LGA chairmen to closely review the planning, implementation and results of polio eradication activities, improving routine immunisation/primary health care and identifying remedies for poor-performing LGAs;*
- 3. Allocating additional financial and human resources to strengthen primary health care so that it can sustain routine immunisation services and improve the implementation of campaigns (Immunisation Plus Days) in states;*
- 4. Reporting back to the president through the National Economic Council (NEC) on a quarterly basis on the status of polio eradication efforts, including routine immunisation, in states; and*
- 5. Improving primary health care as a more holistic plan to address the issue of immunisation through community health insurance schemes.*

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In a visit in June 2010, Mr Gates held a special session with the Forum to chart a roadmap for future work towards the eradication of polio.

One of the most exciting initiatives was the 2011 Immunisation Leadership Challenge, designed to reward states that made significant improvements in the eradication of polio and in routine immunisation by the end of 2012. This joint initiative of the Gates Foundation and the NGF was created during a visit to Nigeria in September–October 2011 by Mr Gates.

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The Forum drew up a calendar in which all the states agreed to participate in the quarterly polio eradication advocacy campaign, to be personally supervised by the governors. In a visit in June 2010, Mr Gates held a special session with the Forum to chart a roadmap for future work towards the eradication of polio.

One of the most exciting initiatives was the 2011 Immunisation Leadership Challenge, designed to reward states that made significant improvements in the eradication of polio and in routine immunisation by the end of 2012. This joint initiative of the Gates Foundation and the NGF was created during a visit to Nigeria in September–October 2011 by Mr Gates.

He recognised that “Nigeria’s leaders are critical to making Nigeria polio free and their renewed confirmation... of the Abuja Commitments will make an important difference. Polio cases in Nigeria dropped 95 percent from 2009 to 2010, proving that Nigeria has the tools and ability to end the spread of this virus. Nigeria should be proud of its tremendous success in the fight against polio, but we are at a crossroads and the

stakes are high.” In 2011, attention to polio had waned and polio had re-emerged as a serious threat to children’s health. “I am encouraged that President Jonathan and leaders throughout the country have reaffirmed their commitment to make Nigeria polio free and to contribute to making the world free of this crippling disease once and for all,” he said. “Their renewed leadership can stop the resurgence in polio cases we have seen this year.”

Mr Gates’ message was reinforced by His Excellency Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi, Governor of Rivers State and Chairman of the Nigeria Governors’ Forum as of 2011. “Nigeria’s governors want to stop polio and improve routine immunisation to protect Nigeria’s children against preventable diseases. This award recognises that effort, and the fact that we need to work hard if we want to stop polio in this country by 2012.”

The Challenge pledged to award US\$500,000 to states that reached a pre-defined threshold of improvement. Its overall objective was to fast-track achievement of the global milestone of interrupting the further transmission of the wild polio virus in Nigeria. The award was to be used to support governors’ top health priorities, including malaria, tuberculosis, HIV prevention and treatment, and safe drinking water and hygiene programmes. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation also promised to match contributions by states to their chosen health project of up to US\$250,000. Only six state governors qualified at that time, but it was the citizens of Nigeria who really gained by the commitment to the initiative. The number of polio cases dropped by about 50 per cent before the end of 2012, rose slightly in 2013 and dropped again drastically in 2014.

The key to this success has been the relationship between the NGF and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which has supported the Forum in so many ways. “As Nigeria’s partner, the Gates Foundation is committed to doing what we can to support their efforts to end this terrible, but preventable, disease.” The Foundation provided technical support to the Secretariat, and the Secretariat in turn provided the required support to the states. The Foundation employs Dr Zikrullah Giwa, a specialist on polio and immunisation, to coordinate the Immunisation Leadership Challenge.

## Economic Diversification and Internally Generated Revenue



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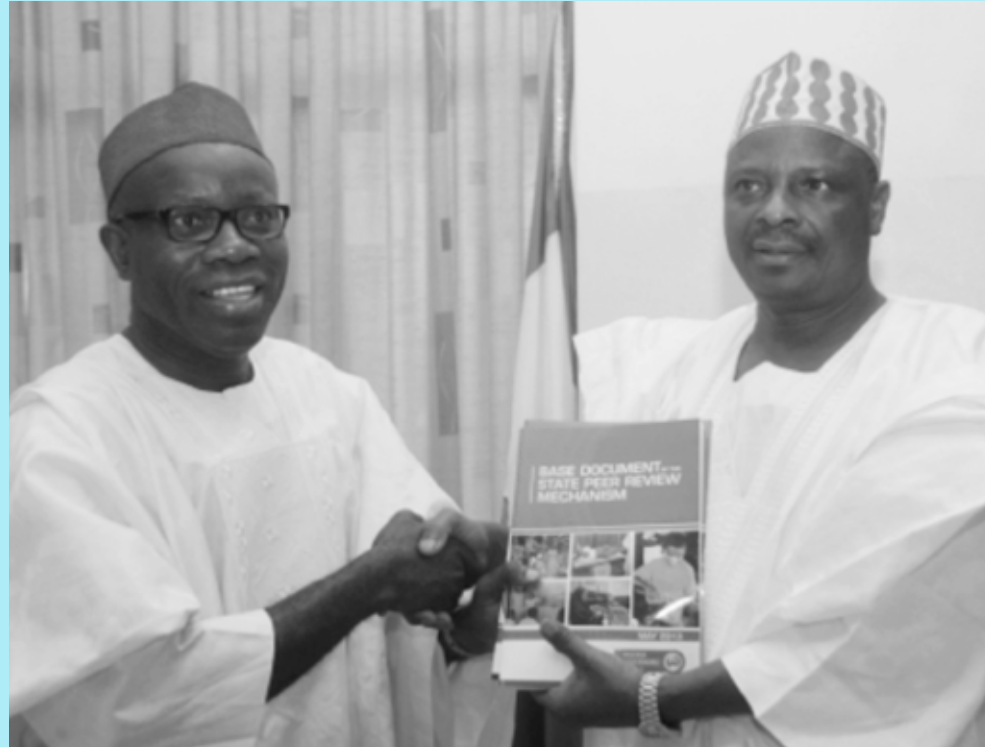
The initiative on economic diversification began with the internally generated revenue (IGR) conference of November 2009. Its theme was “Surviving the Downturn: Refocusing on Internally Generated Revenue”. The NGF noted with concern the dwindling revenue base of the federal, state and local governments owing to the fluctuation in the price of oil and also to the fact that the oil income would not last forever. It recognised the need to identify alternative sources of revenue so as to forestall the dire consequences of overdependence on oil and to ensure that fiscal autonomy would be attained. It appreciated too the need for all stakeholders to work together in building the revenue base of the country.

Driven by these considerations, the workshop reached a series of resolutions that would help the governors to become the driving force of IGR in their state. Firstly, the resolutions encouraged them to create an enabling environment for investments in which the revenue base could be shored up through private sector participation and also to find workable ways to identify and prioritise alternative revenue-generating channels. Secondly, they recommended ensuring the participation of all relevant stakeholders in the administration of tax and generating a reliable database of taxpayers that would aid policymakers and tax experts in assessing major changes to the tax system. Thirdly, they encouraged the transformation of Inland Revenue Services by building more proactive, less intrusive relationships with the community and strongly recommended the adoption of an efficient IT platform, the employment of more tax-collection experts and the establishment of stronger collecting processes so as to help professionalise tax administration.

There was a significant improvement in IGR performance in several states after the first workshop.

## The State Peer Review Mechanism

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“With the SPRM, Nigeria has set the record to be the first country to undertake peer review at the subnational level in the world. And the credit has to go to Dr Saraki, who ‘midwifed’ the initiative.”

*Dr Afeikhena Jerome, SPRM National Coordinator*

In 2007, after the raging debate about the various ways of using the funds that had been stockpiled in the Excess Crude Account, the National Economic Council directed the 36 states to peer-review themselves. There had been some early work done through the State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies programme in 2005 and 2006 but it had soon been discontinued. The NGF took on the task of driving state peer reviews forward and it mandated the Secretariat to carry out a preparatory exercise in all 36 states of the federation. The Forum also directed the Secretariat to bring together a pool of policy consultants and advisers across key sectors to execute it.

In 2009, after completing the restructuring of the Secretariat, Dr Saraki charged it to develop a framework for the formal State Peer Review Mechanism (SPRM) that was to build on his earlier peer-review tour of states.

This peer-review initiative was a clear departure from the politics of the past. The NGF became known for its focus on development issues, governance issues and areas of best practice. The SPRM became a way of encouraging healthy competition and stimulating states to focus on key issues. It became apparent to all outsiders that the Forum no longer focused on politics but on policy issues, development issues and better governance for the benefit of the people.

Some states have gone so far as to set up state offices dedicated to SPRM. This is an encouraging step for the continuity and sustainability of the programme. As the governor of a state will change, it is important that the team in a state dedicated to the SPRM retains continuity regardless of the administration in charge.

The NGF partnered with the SPARC programme of the UK’s Department for International Development to articulate and develop a systematic and robust peer-review process. This was launched in May 2011 as part of the induction programme for new and returning governors. Important milestones that followed included the finalisation



of the SPRM Base Document in July 2011, the inauguration of an 11-member steering committee in November 2011 (with the former chief justice of Nigeria, Justice Mohammed Lawal Uwais, as Chairman) and the training of 107 consultants, drawn from across the country, to assist the Steering Committee during the Technical Review Mission in May 2012. These 107 consultants were selected through a national competition in which about 4,000 experts applied.

Two training sessions were held to induct the consultants. The first was led by Justice Uwais and the second was presided over by Dr Saraki, who had become Vice Chairman of the Steering Committee. The SPARC programme was a close and helpful partner throughout the peer-review process, particularly in carrying out day-to-day work. Before the process was completed, two states (Anambra and Ekiti) had volunteered as pilot states for the project.

### Anambra State

Anambra State successfully blazed the trail in pioneering this unique initiative. The Initiation/Sensitisation Workshop was held in Awka in September 2011, to formally start the process in the state. The state subsequently submitted its self-assessment report to the Secretariat in March 2012, paving way for the visit of the Technical Review Mission to Anambra State from 14 to 18 May 2012.

The state was peer-reviewed by the NGF in March 2013. The process identified ten (10) commendable practices worthy of emulation by other states. These included instituting peace and security in collaboration with security agencies and communities that led to the abatement of the turbulent crisis that beset Anambra politics between 1999 and 2006. The state government has systematically brought governance down to the grassroots and to the community level through hometown associations. There are virtually no abandoned projects and the accumulated contract debt is minimal. Other practices included support for small and medium-sized enterprise and job-creation through the Anambra State Government/Bank of Industry N2billion Intervention Fund and the new set of budget classification codes and charts of accounts, which allow spending to be tracked more scientifically and promote accountability. Anambra State is leading other states in information and communications technology (ICT) by



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way of establishing the Microsoft Academy, the return of several secondary and primary schools to their former owners and the good network of roads linking the state capital to all LGAs.

The review process also brought to the fore some overarching issues important enough to deserve a holistic approach because of their wider impact on the quality of governance in the state. These included the non-conduct of local government elections since 1988, several challenges in the area of budgeting, the insignificant role played by the state's illustrious sons and daughters in its affairs and weak internally generated revenue, hovering around N500 million monthly or 20 per cent of actual revenue receipts since 2007 despite a great revenue potential.

A programme of action has since been put in place to correct these underlying deficiencies and Anambra State is already implementing some of the recommendations, such as holding local government elections in January 2014. It is required to report on progress in implementing this programme every year. Its development partners, including DFID's SPARC programme, are already assisting it in tackling some of these challenges.



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## Ekiti State

Following the launch of the State Peer Review Mechanism in May 2011, Ekiti State embraced the process in line with the commitment of Governor Fayemi's administration to continually strengthen the participatory democratic process. It hosted a two-day sensitisation workshop to formally commence the process in November 2011. About 1,000 participants attended the event, which was presided over by Justice Uwais and attended by His Excellency the Rt Hon. Rotimi Amaechi, Governor of Rivers State and Chairman of the NGF; His Excellency Donald Duke, recently the governor of Cross River State; and representatives of the United Nations Office in Nigeria and DFID, among others.

Ekiti State submitted its self-assessment report to the Secretariat in September 2012, which prepared the way for the visit of the State Technical Review Mission.

Ekiti was peer-reviewed together with Anambra State by the NGF in March 2013. The Ekiti State Peer Review Report, presented by Senator Saraki to the governors on behalf of the Steering Committee, identified 10 commendable practices. Among them were transparency and accountability in governance, social protection and inclusion including the payment of welfare grants to the aged (65 years old and above) and efforts to curtail gender-based violence through the promulgation of enabling legislation. Others were revamping education at all levels in the state, a commitment to rapid enhancement of ICT competence and development of a world-class 'tourism corridor' around the Ikogosi Warm Spring. Ekiti State's main documents, including budgets, are fully uploaded on its website, which was ranked as the best state website by the NGF Secretariat.

“...the governors on behalf of the Steering Committee, identified 10 commendable practices.”



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The Report also indicated areas of concern: no local government elections in the state since 1999; low internal revenue-generation; challenges in reforming the civil service; and chronic violent party and electoral politics in Ekiti State. A programme of action has since been put in place to correct these underlying deficiencies.

## Meeting with Development Partners

With the assistance of DFID, the Secretariat met with all heads of agency of development partners in May 2013. The meeting was convened in order to acquaint them with its work, especially on the State Peer Review Mechanism. The Anambra and Ekiti state peer review reports generated much interest. Representatives of Anambra and Ekiti states also made presentations on how they could be supported in implementing the State Programme of Action emanating from the peer review process. The effort is already yielding fruit, as development partners, especially DFID, have accelerated their engagement with both states.



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The first Nigeria Governors' Forum retreat took place in Abuja in October 2007. Its objective was to chart a new course towards effective and accountable governance in Nigeria. As Dr Saraki observed, the retreat was carefully mapped out to respond to those issues that are critical to effective governance at the state level and for the efficient operation of Nigeria's federalism.

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It was attended by His Excellency President Umaru Yar'Adua, who declared the event open, by General Abubakar Abdusalam, who chaired the opening session, and by the governors of the 36 states. In all, 20 papers were presented by eminent Nigerians and invited dignitaries on key governance issues and the delivery of democratic dividends to the people. There were papers from the Hon. Aminu Masari, Prof. Ben Nwabuzwe, Prof. Babatunde Osotilehin, Dr Shamsudeen Usman, Dr Donald Kabaruka, Mrs Ifueko Okauru, Dr Abraham Nwankwo among others.

The retreat's resolutions were far-reaching. Two prominent ones were identified, firstly, the need for governors to restore their lost credibility, to tackle corruption and to adhere to and respect the rule of law, transparency and accountability through exemplary conduct and, secondly, the need for states to implement contributory pension schemes.

Since the first retreat, there have been several others. The Secretariat collates their recommendations and uses them to track progress in states. The retreats have addressed a number of national issues of importance to the governors, including but not limited to the minimum wage, constitutional amendments, the Excess Crude Account, subsidies and even relations and interfaces between the states themselves and between states and the federal government.

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## The Strategic Plan

The NGF had increasingly begun to play an important part in promoting good governance, improved service delivery and better coordination between all levels of government and non-governmental organisations in Nigeria.

Dr Saraki, aware of the time limitations on his chairmanship, was intent on ensuring that the work he had done in bringing the governors together and shaping them into an influential body did not fade upon his departure from office. The NGF had increasingly begun to play an important part in promoting good governance, improved service delivery and better coordination between all levels of government and non-governmental organisations in Nigeria. It therefore made sense to articulate and formalise this new role in a document that set out the shared vision of the governors and gave structure and direction for the organisation itself and a blueprint for future plans –thus the first Strategic Plan, for 2010 to 2012.

## Objectives

The key objectives of the Strategic Plan include:

1. To provide a forum for governors to discuss issues of mutual/national interest and state concern, to share experiences, techniques and good practice and, where appropriate, to reach a consensus; and to present the NGF and governors' standpoint and views in discussions with federal and other institutions /organisations, both national and international;
2. To play a significant and influential role in dispute-resolution at national, state and local government levels;
3. To act as a link between state governors and governmental and non-governmental institutions on matters affecting governance and service delivery;
4. To provide a vehicle for states to work together in areas of joint or mutual interest and to support the development and implementation of coordinated solutions;
5. To develop and implement a system of peer review at the state level in order to encourage efficient and effective service delivery, improved governance and enhanced development performance; and
6. To develop an efficient and effective NGF Secretariat that is able to manage the day-to-day affairs of the NGF and to provide specific technical support in a range of areas, including:
  - *Supporting governors and their staff to develop their governance and management skills;*
  - *Developing and implementing an effective two-way communication strategy that ensures that all stakeholders are aware of the role of the NGF and the contributions it is making to national development and good governance, thereby enhancing the image of the Forum at all levels;*

- *Identifying, researching, collating and analysing data on key public policy issues and producing reports for consideration by the NGF and other stakeholders; and*
- *Providing a vehicle for debate and the dissemination of ideas and proposals on key public policy issues.*

The Strategic Plan was both a statement of intent and an acknowledgement of the milestone attained since 2007 under the chairmanship of Dr Saraki. Strategic planning has since become a regular feature of the Forum.

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### Ministries, Departments and Agencies

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Another key role of the NGF has been to act as a link between state governors and governmental and non-governmental institutions on matters affecting governance and service delivery. Increasingly MDAs and NGOs find the NGF Secretariat an indispensable tool for interacting with the 36 governors.

The NGF also realised early on that the cascade of policy between the federal government and state governments could be facilitated better by replicating the federal institutional framework. This has been done effectively through the establishment of state debt-management offices, state bureaus of statistics and state planning commissions. The NGF, in partnership with the National Planning Commission and the National Bureau of Statistics, is driving forward the computation of the State Gross Domestic Product.

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### The Forum of Federations

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As intimated earlier, one of the strongest partners of the NGF has been the Canada-based Forum of Federations (FoF). This partnership was amply demonstrated in its fiscal federalism training, undertaken in collaboration with the NGF and the Federal Ministry of Finance. The first instance was a two-day seminar in Abuja in 2008 on Challenges and Opportunities in Fiscal Federalism: Nigerian and International Perspectives. The event featured case studies presented by three international FoF experts, from India, South Africa and Argentina, and a case study from Nigeria, presented by Professor Akpan Ekpo.

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### Development Partners

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Since 2009, a number of memoranda of understanding (MoUs) have been signed, including with the World Bank; DFID; the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance; the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Prior to Dr Saraki's chairmanship of the Forum and the restructuring of the Secretariat, there was not a single formal partnership or relationship with any of the numerous international development agencies and institutions that operated in Nigeria. Since 2009, a number of memoranda of understanding (MoUs) have been signed, including with the World Bank; DFID; the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance; the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit [German Federal Enterprise for International Cooperation](GIZ).

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## Benefits

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The major benefits to Nigeria of the NGF's relations with its development partners include:

1. *Rolling out programmes across the 36 states through a common platform;*
2. *Communicating results and outcomes to governors directly. Previously partners would travel to the states and sign MoUs to implement certain projects. But owing to governors' incredibly busy schedules and numerous responsibilities, reaching them again would be very difficult. Partners would have contact points such as directors and commissioners of departments. Through the Forum, it became possible to reach out to the governors; and*
3. *Facilitating experience-sharing and peer-learning.*

Three of its most important strategic partners are DFID, the UNDP and UNICEF.

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## Department for International Development

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DFID has been a great collaborator and ally of the NGF throughout its history but particularly through the SPARC programme since 2009 during Dr Saraki's time as Chairman of the Forum.

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One of its greatest contributions has been its support of the State Peer Review Mechanism, for which it provided not only initial advice and funds but also facilitation of the development of benchmarks and indicators, articulation of the SPRM Base Document and formation of the steering committee. In addition, it assisted in the drawing up of the first Strategic Plan, provided expert advice on the domestication units to provide support to the governors during the restructuring of the Secretariat and helped to fund the FoF's Fiscal Federalism programme. SPARC committed itself to providing the NGF Secretariat with a full-fledged project manager and assisted it with technical aid for the provision of a knowledge-management system. This was to ensure that the NGF's stakeholders could always find first-hand information on events and activities relating to the Forum when required.

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## The UNDP and UNICEF

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The United Nations Development Programme has partnered with the NGF since 2007 in a number of ways. Its biggest involvement has been to hold a series of seminars and workshops across the country in order to sensitise the states and other stakeholders to the UNDP's publication of the 2009 National Human Development Report (NHDR). The first in the series, the North Central leg, was held in Minna, Niger State in July 2010. Although the NGF was grateful for the efforts of the UNDP, the governors questioned the likelihood of the NHDR document actually being implemented. They suggested that the states should all be brought together through the Forum and that the roll-out of the report should be undertaken on a zonal level. They persuaded the UNDP representatives that the document needed to be explained to people from the states – how the report was prepared and what it meant – so that similar activities could be carried out internally in future. The UNDP representatives followed this advice and the country was broken down into its six zones, each of which was covered separately.



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### The Governors' Induction Programme

When Dr Saraki assumed leadership of the NGF, he recognised the need for an induction programme for governors, as is the case in most developed countries. The idea was to acquaint them with the prospects and challenges of governance so as to make them better prepared to meet their responsibilities.

The first-ever induction for newly elected and re-elected governors took place in May 2011 and its theme was the “Art of Governance and Experience-Sharing”.

It was attended by 233 participants, comprising newly elected, re-elected governors, some former governors, development partners and several distinguished personalities.



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The event, which was declared open by His Excellency Dr Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, featured presentations from Dr Bukola Saraki, Chairman of the NGF, and goodwill messages from DFID, the World Bank and the United Nations as well as inspirational messages from three elder statesmen: Ambassador (Dr) Maitama Sule, Rev. (Dr) Matthew Kukah and Chief Emeka Anyaoku. It was also attended by a delegation of former governors and chiefs of staff from the US such as Bill Richardson, Governor of New Mexico (2003–2010); Douglas Wilder, Governor of Virginia (1990–1994); Brian Condit, Chief of Staff to Governor Bill Richardson; Cynthia Eisenhauer, Chief of Staff to Governor Tom Vilsack of Iowa and William H. Leighty, Chief of Staff to governors Tim Kaine and Mark Warner of Virginia.

After the official opening, there were presentations from the staff of the National Governors Association and various experts. The speakers also shared experiences with former governors on issues that would lead to better governance, accountability and, ultimately, greater dividends for all Nigerians.

The main focus of all the presentations was on how new and returning governors could establish policies, set priorities and manage programmes using the best practices shared by their counterparts. The leaders of various Nigerian institutions, such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, the Millennium Development Goals Office, the Security and Exchange Commission, the Code of Conduct Bureau and the Federal Inland Revenue Service, also made presentations on the economy and key governance issues.

It was a hugely successful event with positive feedback from participants and governors.

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## The NGF Federal Liaison

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The idea behind the 36 states maintaining liaison offices in Abuja in order to facilitate interface between the states and the three arms of government, and specific and specific difficulties that Dr Saraki and his colleagues had to deal with, for instance, the Minimum Wage Bill crisis, which plot if allowed to unfold may have resulted in a permanently strained relationship between states and labour unions The Fiscal Responsibility and Public Procurement Acts are further examples of pieces of legislation that affect states and that have been contentious because of a gap in the interface between the different stakeholders. It was this gap that prompted the decision to create the NGF Federal Liaison office. The officers of this unit will be responsible for protecting, leveraging and enhancing the necessary relationship between the states and the National Assembly. The newly created Federal Liaison Unit is to assume the responsibilities of but not limited to:

- Arranging and facilitating meetings between relevant officials in the states and at the federal level on areas of mutual cooperation on fundamental issues such as amendments and alteration of the constitution of the Federal Republic;
- Monitoring the annual budget process of the federal government and facilitating opportunities for states' input;
- Facilitating interface between states' Houses of Assembly and the National Assembly; and
- Providing periodic briefings to the principals regarding matters of national interest and their implications coming from the legislature.

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## The NGF Secretariat as a Policy Hub and Resource Centre

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The knowledge-management (KM) initiative was part of a series of engagements initiated by the Secretariat. It was geared towards institutional capacity-building and repositioning the Secretariat as a world-class policy think-tank that renders services to its principals professionally in line with global best practices.

For this purpose, the KM Unit was developed with support from DFID's SPARC programme to drive the KM initiative of the NGF. The Unit manages the knowledge processes of the Forum, integrating KM in major projects and programmes championed by the NGF such as the SPRM. The Unit is responsible for fostering the Secretariat's knowledge-management culture, ensuring that systems are developed and implemented to support internal management and provide effective and efficient knowledge-sharing tools and processes for states as the SPRM is implemented.


To achieve this, KM tools such as governance share fairs were initiated and are being carried out in the six geopolitical zones of the country. These share fairs facilitate peer-learning among states and identify best practices and lessons learned by states. Furthermore, a dedicated and robust content management system has been developed. It serves as a hub for generating, storing and disseminating knowledge across states. Other KM Unit activities include specialized training targeted at capacity-building for key state officials supporting governors and those heading key ministries, departments and agencies.

In line with the KM framework and the vision to develop a standard resource centre with knowledge resources in the area of governance, public policies and democratic rule in Nigeria, the NGF Secretariat is working to develop a library containing diverse knowledge resources in those areas in both print and electronic formats. To this end, the Secretariat has continued to work closely with its partners in order to access and acquire knowledge resources on subnational entities in Nigeria. These partners include the World Bank, the Forum of Federations, SPARC, GIZ, the National Planning Commission, the National Bureau of Statistics, the National Library Commission, the Millennium Development Goals Office, the Debt Management Office, the National Population Commission and the Independent National Electoral Commission.

The NGF Secretariat currently houses many resources not readily available elsewhere in Nigeria, especially information about state policies, activities, programmes and projects.



# Testimonials



“It is a wonderful experience for me because I came here to impart knowledge to the governors of Nigeria but instead I’m going away with far more knowledge than I came with about the people and the mosaic of Nigeria and the strength of the heart of these governors in wanting to do well for the people of Nigeria.

**Bill Leighty**, Former Chief of Staff to Governor Mark Warner of Virginia, 2002–2006 and Governor Tim Kaine, 2006–2010 of Virginia

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**Mr Peter Obi, Governor of Anambra State, 2006–2014, Vice Chairman, NGF and Chairman, South East Governors' Forum**

**On the NGF:** It's been part of the nation-building and integration between the various states of Nigeria. This is part of what is lacking in Nigeria. You now see governors come together, meet together, discuss national issues, discuss on issues that bother the nation, individual states and everything. And I believe that is the way forward. And I am sure you must have known about the recent introduction of peer review. These are things that have made it look more like a country where we are together, trying to work together to face issues as a country.

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**Mallam Isa Yuguda, CON, Governor of Bauchi State, 2007–2015**

**On Dr Saraki:** Dr Saraki has contributed immensely to the developments and all the successes that we have recorded today as a governors' forum. Firstly, he's been very consistent and, secondly, he is very focused and very much interested in seeing through those objectives that the Forum is meant to achieve and really pursues it to a logical conclusion. He never loses steam in pursuing those objectives, he has been very consistent in calling meetings, he has also been fearless in addressing issues that affect the nation. He calls us and we intervene where it is necessary and we do that very frequently and of course this explains why he served for four years without any intervention because all of us believed in his leadership.

What you see today is an idea that has happened under his chairmanship. I was a member of a six-man delegation that attended the American Annual Governors Meeting and we learned a lot. You can see also that his leadership has attracted the attention of development partners like DFID, USAID and several other agencies to the benefit of federating states.

**On the NGF:** I think one of the most important achievements of course is contributing to stabilising the polity and cementing relationships between all the state governments, and that has encouraged national unity. It has served as a unifying institution for the nation.

The NGF is an institution that symbolises the unity of the country. And of course governors sit down to discuss national issues that affect not only the polity but the economy, security of the nation and how to address problems that are unique to environments. With this you can see that the institution is really very key to the development and growth of the nation.

**On the future of the NGF:** We are key stakeholders because we are the federating units. And if we think together, work together, we would achieve greater unity for the country and we would collapse some of these artificial barriers of language, tribe, indigeneship and non-indigeneship all these funny things about religion, culture and so on. These are the fundamental issues we need to address which are causing ripples across the country.

These are some of the critical issues; and I believe that with the governors' forum coming together and addressing them, it will serve as a unifying force for our country. I think we are forging ahead.

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**Liyel Imoke, Governor of Cross River, 2007–2015 and Chairman, South Governors' Forum**

**On Dr Saraki:** The NGF was a bit of an informal grouping. When he came in, he thought we should formalise the relationship, set up a secretariat; and a director general was appointed, staff was all funded. We have articulated a lot of positions for the governors, we have been able to do peer reviews, we have been able to learn from one another. The Secretariat has helped to provide information to the Forum and that has strengthened the Forum significantly.

**On the NGF:** The NGF is strong and vibrant and has contributed to the growth, development and stability of the country. It is a forum where you have the whole 36 governors participating. Decisions that are taken in that forum ultimately and generally have an impact on the lives of every Nigerian. We have worked hard as a team. It is one thing to have a governors' forum, it is another to have a forum as a team. So we remain a team and we work collectively under the Chairmanship of Dr Saraki, who has done creditably well in terms of elevating the status and relevance of the Forum.

We have been particularly proud of the role that we played in stabilising the polity after the passing of our late president. We have also played a key role in the constitutional amendment that led to review of electoral reform and other processes and we participated actively in ensuring that we enshrine federalism as contained in our constitution. We have also had peer-review mechanisms put in place, and that has really helped us as governors. So there is a lot of solidarity and I think a lot of the credit goes to the chairman.

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**Comrade Adams Oshiomhole, CON, Governor of Edo State, 2008–2016**

**On Dr Saraki:** I think one has to appreciate the leadership that Saraki has provided in the sense that the Forum started like an unstructured organisation with loose relationships. It met in hotel rooms on the basis of events and took a more ad hoc as opposed to a programmed and systematic approach in addressing issues of collaboration and cooperation. It now recognises that you need to have a secretariat that coordinates the governors and provides some administrative backup, and we are beginning to see the Secretariat evolving in research, sourcing and sharing information with governors and talking about peer-review mechanisms. Because we are colleagues, we can talk without inhibition to one another without the usual protocols and therefore have a common national attitude. So I think on the whole it has been extremely valuable. It can be time-consuming when you have something to do and you are invited to Abuja, and that takes you off your desk; but when you look at the cost-benefit analysis, I think that it has been worthwhile. The challenge is now to build on this.

**On the NGF:** First is to revisit the primary purpose of the Forum. Nigeria is a federal system and we have 36 states. I think Nigeria has resolved to run a federal system because we recognise the facts of our diversity and our level of cultural differences; and even the economic circumstances of various parts of the country are not exactly the same, which explains why we opted for a federal instead of a unitary system. However, we belong to one country and we have one economy. And so, even as I am the governor of one of the states, there are a couple of things that I need to learn or share with governors of other states. And learning from one another, exchanging views and ideas and reflecting together on challenges can help to enrich each other and improve in the quality of governance.

Secondly, given the challenge of building national unity, the relationship between governors and among governors can help to motivate the followership to recognise that if leaders can come together and reflect and collaborate on variety of issues, then hopefully citizens should also be inspired to see themselves as one regardless of where they reside, what they do and regardless of their religion. So for me, these things are important.

The third element is the fact that on some issues, we do relate with the federal government. It is somehow important that we have a coordinated approach so that in communicating with the federal government we have positions that reflect the average, i.e. the general thinking of the states, because the federal and the state must complement each other. The Forum offers a platform for such reflection and gives us a common voice on issues about which we need to relate and communicate effectively with federal authorities or agencies, and I think it has worked perfectly well.

**On the future of the NGF:** It is just to remain focused on the key issue, which is to build solidarity among and between governors and to keep focused on the great issue of development because the bottom line in all this is, how does this impact the life of the man on the street? Is he benefiting as a result of this interaction? Or are we just spending taxpayers' money and are not able to point out what we can achieve? So I think it has a future because the governors will always continue to cooperate, they will always begin to collaborate and share ideas. And the better organised the Secretariat is, the more experienced, more professional staff it has who are able to conduct research – that can help us because governance cannot be on the basis of rule of thumb. There may be things that if I have to handle them at the level of the Edo State government, it might not be cost-effective. But if we pull resources together on an issue, we can get it done. So I think it has a future but it has to remain focused. Minimum bureaucracy, more of direct action, because it is about governance.

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**Mr Babatunde Raji Fashola, SAN, Governor of Lagos State, 2007–2015**

**On Dr Saraki:** He has given the kind of leadership that has helped propel the Forum forward. I think he brought a lot of direction to the NGF. Before he came, things were not as organised and we only reacted to things as they happened. But during his tenure, we were able to also direct events, and that was very decisive for the country.

**On the NGF:** Some progress clearly has been made and I expect that more progress will be made. I think that as a body, the institution has come into its own, gradually becoming a voice of reason on many occasions in the stabilisation of our democracy and navigating also its very tricky turns and championing compromise wherever it had become necessary to do so. But by and by, I believe that as we come to dissolve the unitary nature of this federalism that we run, the nation becomes more federal in its fullest sense, physically and politically, and the authority and the impact of governors would be much more meaningful and beneficial to the people. In that sense, I think that a lot of progress has been made, and more will be made; and I expect that people will demand much more of their governors as we go along.

**On the future of the NGF:** Even in the future, the Forum will continue to be the stabilising force. Whenever there are national issues, our position will actually be very decisive because we are representatives of Nigeria. All the states are represented in the NGF and I think that is a major role to play in this country.

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**Mu'azu Babangida Aliyu, CON, Governor of Niger State, 2007–2015 and Chairman, Northern States Governors' Forum**

**On Dr Saraki:** He is an excellent leader and I'm happy that we had him.

**On the NGF:** Since we stabilised the NGF – that was sometime in 2007 – we have seen the progress of unity of purpose, progress of oneness and indeed the concept of development because not only do we come together and discuss issues we also peer-review one another and try to learn how others have solved the problems at a much cheaper rate. So for us, the NGF has become a therapeutic venue where we come together and share information and experiences; and we advise one another and, believe me, there is no issue that has come that we have not been able to tackle.

Many people give credit to the National Assembly for so many things, but even the 'Doctrine of Necessity' started from the NGF, and then we went to the National Assembly. But it is not something we take credit for directly because we know that what we want is that things must be done in accordance with the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Any community that does not respect its rules will not progress, and that is our principle. When we come together and look at the issues, we want to make sure that democracy is entrenched properly.

**On the future of the NGF:** I want it to become one of the best institutions in the country, an institution that will be described as entrenching democracy, an institution that has brought good governance in the country, an institution that people will have confidence in so that whatever issue you take to the Nigeria Governors' Forum will be resolved amicably.

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**Ambassador Howard Jeter, Rtd, Former US Ambassador to Nigeria**

**On Dr Saraki:** If you look at him, he is a model to the current generation of leaders and at his age, he has done so much for the state and for Nigeria. He is a pride and a bridge to the generational gap one would say exists and he has brought dynamism, articulation and respect to the NGF. So I think he has done the NGF proud; and for those of us who have seen what he has done, we continue to watch his leadership style with a full sense of responsibility and a call to duty. I think the NGF has benefited immensely from such a dynamic leader. And whoever is going to take over from him will have a very easy ride because he has provided a very sound framework and set a high standard given some of the successes recorded by the Forum so far.

Kudos to the organisation and skill of the outgoing chairman Dr Bukola Saraki. He is leaving a solid foundation for the NGF. It is registered with the CAC and has a secretariat. Legally it is sound; and if you see its programme function, it is bringing international best practices into it. It has invited people from the US to come and talk to governors in Nigeria about the experience of America in democracy, and so you can see that experience-sharing not only has national borders but has also got beyond Nigerian borders. I think the future is bright for the governors in Nigeria and I believe some of the things we are witnessing now are a function of the benefits that the Forum has created.

**On the NGF:** One has come to appreciate that the Forum has become an institution where governors are really enjoying what they do. And I believe with the kinds of symposiums, exchange visits and experience-sharing that have been done, it is going to be of immense benefit to new governors and would-be governors in future because the foundation has been laid.

They have brought to bear a unity of purpose regardless of party divide, and we are all seeing that they are bringing to Nigeria a united front so that the programmes are for the benefit of the entire people of this country irrespective of their ethnicity, religion and even political differences. I believe they have come a long way and that a unity of purpose has been translated into what we can see as development in many states because you can see that best practices are being shared. These are some of the things that you cannot quantify in terms of Naira and Kobo. But in terms of development, people in the various states will have a better deal at the end of the day.

**On the future of the NGF:** With the socialisation and the democratic culture that is becoming a norm and a strong issue in Nigeria's polity, governance and development enterprise, I believe that the future is bright, and those who have a chance to lead in any organisation, committee or state in Nigeria should know that leadership is not about an individual but about institutions. The future is bright for Africa, and Nigeria is going to lead the way.

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**Bill Leighty**, Former Chief of Staff to Governor Mark Warner of Virginia, 2002–2006 and Governor Tim Kaine, 2006–2010 of Virginia

**On Dr Saraki:** Dr Saraki has set a very strong foundation for the future of the NGF. His work will hopefully be carried on by the new chair, but he has created something that cannot be undone. Once you enable people and you give them freedom of expression and association like he has done and the freedom of ideas that they can share with each other, I do not think future governors will be able to undo that.

**On the NGF:** The role of the NGF is one of bringing together governors who would not otherwise sit down with one another. I am impressed the most with the mosaic of Nigeria, the diversity here but how everyone still sits at the table and is still willing to talk. My impression is that religious diversity is much better handled here than in the US; it is so much more polarised there. There is more respect for each other's religion here. There is also more respect between governors here.

I had an interesting thought as we were watching the discussion about the need for governors to stop being so political and move forward and put the past behind them: everyone who was lecturing the governors on that need should look at themselves and realise what they themselves are doing in their own country. Politics is a very natural thing to occur, and I'm leaving Nigeria with the sense that having looked the governors in the eye and seeing what is in their heart for their people, the states of Nigeria are in very good shape.

**On the NGF induction meeting:** It is a wonderful experience for me because I came here to impart knowledge to the governors of Nigeria but instead I'm going away with far more knowledge than I came with about the people and the mosaic of Nigeria and the strength of the heart of these governors in wanting to do well for the people of Nigeria.

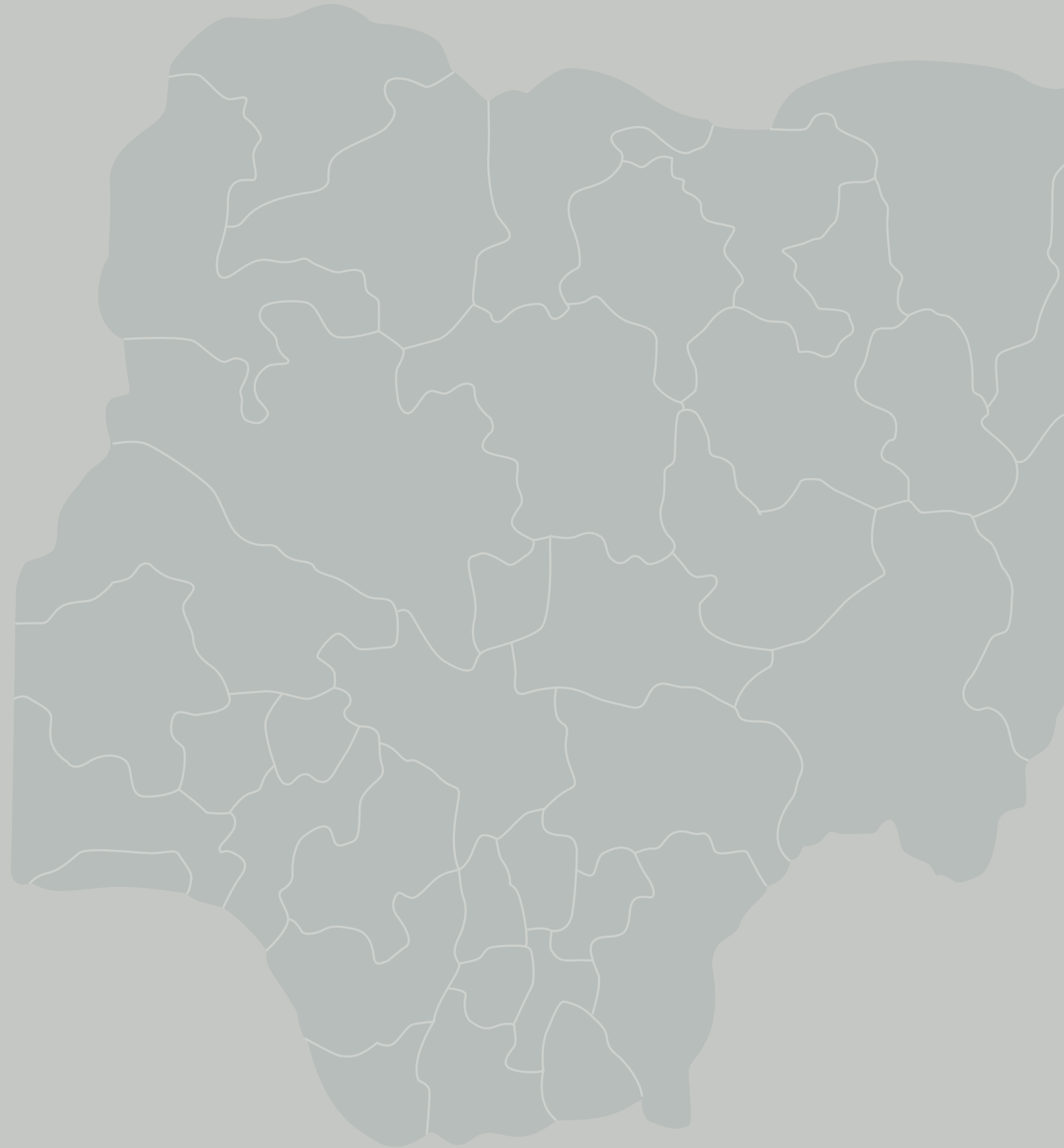
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**Cynthia Eisenhower**, Government Finance Consultant, Former Chief of Staff to Iowa Governor Tom Vilsack, 1999–2007 and Lt Governor Sally Pederson

**On Dr Saraki:** He is a very accomplished statesman, and it is evident in the way he communicates. It is in his relationship with people both inside and outside government. He is very open to differences of opinion, and I think those qualities are important to bring people of diverse opinions together around a common issue and reaching consensus.

**On the NGF:** Certainly the NGF has become much stronger in recent years under Dr Saraki's leadership. It has looked around the world to see where the best practices are. The NGF can bring issues of common interest together for the governors, whether it's education or communications or telecommunications. It can provide opportunities for the governors to interact and talk about problem-solving so that they can actually permit some of the best practices from around the world and accomplish things that the people expect.

# Appendix



“One has come to appreciate that the Forum has become an institution where governors are really enjoying what they do. And I believe with the kinds of symposiums, exchange visits and experience-sharing that have been done, it is going to be of immense benefit to new governors and would-be governors in future because the foundation has been laid.”

**Ambassador Howard Jeter**, Rtd, Former US Ambassador to Nigeria

## Major NGF Events *from 2007 until today*

Date	Activity	Partner Organisation
26–27 October 2007	First NGF retreat	
25–27 March 2008	Seminar: Challenges and Opportunities in Fiscal Federalism: Nigerian and International Perspectives	Forum of Federations (FoF), Canada
2009–2010	Restructuring of NGF Secretariat	
1 February 2009	First meeting between governors and Bill Gates to sign Abuja Declaration on Polio	
16–18 November 2009	First internally generated revenue (IGR) conference	
17–28 May 2010	NGF Secretariat management mentoring visit to National Governors Association (NGA)	
9–11 July 2010	NGF participation at annual conference of NGA	
19–20 July 2010	Stakeholders Sensitisation Workshop on the 2009 National Human Development Report (NHDR) (Niger State for North Central Zone)	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
22–23 November 2010	Stakeholders Sensitisation Workshop on 2009 NHDR (Rivers State for SouthSouth Zone)	UNDP
8 February 2011	Launch of First NGF Strategic Plan (2010–2012)	

Date	Activity	Partner Organisation
18 May 2011	Stakeholders' Workshop on State Peer Review Mechanism (SPRM)	
19–20 May 2011	First induction programme for newly elected and re-elected governors	
23 May 2011	Election of Governor Amaechi as Chairman of NGF	
24 May 2011	Meeting between governors and UNSecretary-General Ban Ki-Moon	
5 July 2011	Launch of SPRM	
19 July 2011	Meeting between governors and Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) leadership on implementation of minimum wage	
29 August 2011	Second meeting between NGF and Bill Gates	
16 November–8 December 2011	Seminar: Public Expenditure Management for State officials	Gogosa Ltd
20 November–11 December 2011	Specialized training for governors' convoy drivers	Federal Road Safety Commission
January–December 2012	Quarterly polio awareness campaign in all states	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation FoF, Canada

## Major NGF Events *from 2007 until today*

Date	Activity	Partner Organisation
20 February 2012	Policy dialogue on oil and gas management in federal countries	
2–3 May 2012	Induction training for Batch 'A' national experts on SPRM	DFID/SPARC (UK Department for International Development /State Partnership for Responsiveness and Capability programme)
24–25 May 2012	Governance Share Fair for South East States	
3 July 2012	Training on SPRM for 36 journalists	DFID/SPARC
4–5 July 2012	Induction training for Batch 'B' national experts on SPRM	DFID/SPARC
28 August – 6 September 2012	Working tour to Germany	GIZ
9 October 2012	Workshop on Improving IGR Through Taxation	CLEEN Foundation
20 March 2013	Peer review of Anambra and Ekiti states	
April 2013	Publication of inaugural speeches for presidents (1999–2011) and governors (2007–2013) of Federal Republic of Nigeria	

Date	Activity	Partner Organisation
17–18 April 2013	Governance Share Fair for South West States	
24 May 2013	NGF chairmanship election	
10–11 June 2013	Public Financial Management Stakeholders Workshop	World Bank, DFID/SPARC
15–16 November 2013	Second NGF retreat	
13–14 March 2014	Third NGF retreat	
14 March 2014	Launch of Second NGF Strategic Plan (2014–2016)	DFID/SPARC
5–6 June 2014	Fourth NGF retreat	



The Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF) is a coalition of the elected Governors of the country's 36 States. It is a non-partisan association which seeks to promote unity, good governance, better understanding and co-operation among the States and ensure a healthy and beneficial relationship between the States and other tiers of government.



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The Nigeria Governors' Forum was established in 1999 following a multi-party conference of all the 36 democratically elected State Governors. The Nigeria Governors' Forum is registered under Part C of the Companies and Allied Matters Act, (CAMA), 1990, and also draws its legality from Section 40 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.