

The

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SUMMARY



Back of the Book

PRIMARY HEALTHCARE CHALLENGE



The NGF
triumph
in Polio
eradication
berths in PHC



PROF. ABBA GAMBO

FOOD SECURITY CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA

The Nigerian Metrological Agency's (NiMET) prediction for the farming season 2022 was almost absolutely true. The rains started early. In most parts of the country, farmers rushed to their farms to plant and the rains ceased abruptly. There is nothing more painful to a farmer than the total loss of seeds. Seeds are held in high esteem, protected heavily and prayed for assiduously. This became the first indicator of a looming food crisis in Nigeria.

The Agricultural value chain is the same the world over. A quick checklist would include land clearing, land preparation, planting, first weeding, fertilizer application, second weeding, pests and disease control, effective and efficient water management system care, real care, as in the case of a couple getting their very first baby. Then the value-chain started disintegrating, tractors became a mirage across the country for land preparation (both harrowing and ploughing); the high cost of diesel from N200/litre to almost N900/litre, changed drastically the usual Tractor Hiring Service of N7,500/hour to about N30,000/hour, with N20,000.00/hour in Yobe State, which is among the lowest in the country. Similarly, the Management of the Yobe State University, Damaturu, fixed it at N10,000.00 (Massive competition further ensued, as the five-month long ASUU strike has forced many academics to the farms). The competition, became on "WHO DO YOU KNOW" basis.

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

With the above scenario, farmers remobilized back to the farms, with Animal Traction, (Animal Powered Mechanization) Camels, Cows, Donkeys and in very frightening cases for the first time, use of hefty men to pull the ploughs! Seeds borrowed from family and friends, or from seed vendors, or

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

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

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

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

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

In the North Western part of the country, Kebbi, Sokoto, Zamfara, Katsina axis, the rains came early and some grains like millet, maize and rice have already started tassling (the grain filling process), then the grasshoppers and the red beaked birds came calling. With already estimated 59% post-harvest loss in Nigeria, State governments should be advised to mop up food for the strategic Grain Reserve methods.

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

Just yesterday, 14th July, 2022, the FDC released the inflation rate for the month of June at 18.4%, higher than the 14.1% of May, 2022.

The question is, will Nigeria be food secured this year, 2022? With price hike in food commodities, and 2023 is an election year.



Commentary

THE FIRST HALF OF 2022 IS GONE

We just entered the second half of the year 2022 and increasingly, Governors are drawing closer to their people and undertaking tasks that endear them more, at the grassroots. These pro-poor efforts are a result of some of the flagship programs of the Nigeria Governors' Forum, NGF, and partners like the World Bank, the European Union, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Dangote Foundation, and many others like them, in the last couple of years.

The World Bank's Open Government Program (OGP) is an example. Through it, Governors are rewarded for conforming to global best practices. It induces transparency and keeps the people aware of the untapped opportunities available in their domains. This happens because there is openness. Openness has encouraged people to pay their taxes. It is also bringing the subnational governments and their people together. Owing to regular training by the NGF, more effective ways of sourcing IGR are gradually being embraced. They are technically assisted by the Help Desk.

As a collective, Governors themselves have resuscitated the confidence of the people. Now teams desire partnership, just as individually, many governors have responded to pressing issues with ease.

This edition of the Executive Summary contains some of the reported (many are still unreported) activities of some state Governors. Dr. Victor Ikpeazu of Abia State rose to the aid of the people of Umunneochi Local Government Area to inaugurate its security outfit. He charged the people to take over all ungoverned spaces in the area.

Senator Atiku Bagudu of Kebbi State on his part, approved the sum of two billion, nine hundred and eighty-one million, eight hundred and fifty six thousand, four hundred and sixty-five naira, forty eight kobo (N2,981,856,465.48) for the payment of gratuity and death benefits for 2021.

Bagudu also graciously approved financial assistance to successful candidates of Kebbi State into the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), 2022; candidates for Regular Intake into the Nigerian Army and those selected for interview into the Nigerian Defence Academy, 74th Regular Course.

The Northern Governors' Forum met with the Minister of Agriculture Dr. Mohammed Mahmood Abubakar over the National Livestock Transformation Programme and the State Level Project Socialisation on Livestock Productivity and Resilience Support Project (L-PRES), in the region.

The meeting at the Transcorp Hilton Abuja was chaired by Simon Bako Lalong, Chairman of the Forum and Governor of Plateau State. It was attended by Governors of Kwara, Niger, Kebbi, Kaduna and

Deputy Governors of Benue, Kogi, Bauchi and Nasarawa States.

Governor Samuel Ortom of Benue State called on Muslims in the country to pray against the unabating security challenges in the country, saying the deteriorating situation arguably demands divine intervention.

The Governor said it is an understatement to submit that the nation is overwhelmed by the security challenges and cited the recent terrorist attacks on Kuje Custodial Center, Abuja and President Muhammadu Buhari's convoy as "national embarrassment".

Governor Lalong also greeted Muslims at Sallah for commemorating another significant event in the Muslim calendar which brings to the fore the message of sacrifice, love, tolerance, and unity as preached by the Holy Prophet (PBH).

There was jubilation in Enugu State where the National Universities Commission (NUC) granted license to Enugu State Government, recognising the State University of Medical and Applied Sciences (SUMAS), Igbo-Eno, Enugu State. The Committee of Vice Chancellors had sometime ago visited the NGF Secretariat and met a listening ear.

It is obvious that diverse entities in the country, be it organisations, groups or persons are becoming aware that the NGF is the go-to-guy.

It is for this reason that the Plateau State Governor Simon Bako Lalong hosted Kunle Adeyanju, the diasporan biker who rode from London to Nigeria. Kunle was in Jos as part of his advocacy for the fight against Polio which was recorded in the UK and reiterated that Malawi, Cote D'Ivoire and Togo all still have Polio. Adeyanju met Gov. Lalong at the oldest golf course in Nigeria, Rayfield 1913.

He said he is still going round the country to encourage Nigerians to keep on doing what they have done to fight Polio so that the disease does not come back. Through a partnership with the BMGF, the NGF is credited with eradicating polio just as it is known to have joined hands with the Federal Government to combat Covid-19. NGF's recorded successes in health have now birthed the Primary Healthcare Challenge Fund initiative, which is just waiting for the Governors' endorsement.

The departure of Firo Alhassan Kaka, NGF's indefatigable Programmes Manager, the States' Financial Transparency, Accountability and Sustainability, SFTAS, program and many other events of the Secretariat are served in print and in pictures. Most importantly, advocacy for the PHC Fund project has commenced from this edition, beginning with the profile of its key stakeholders, the commissioners of health. They are in no special order.

THE TEAM

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UNICEF, NGF ALLIANCE

**That no child is
out of school**

To find children hawking on the streets during school hours is not a strange sight in Nigeria. Children hawk on the streets during the day or are idling during school hours. To consider this a social problem is only to view a tip of the iceberg on an hourglass. There are the parents who are fortunate to send their children to school but they constantly remain in fear due to a series of constant and existential threats of kidnappings and the like that militate against schooling, that may suddenly occur while in the classroom.

This has resulted in a crisis. There is a high percentage of out-of-school children and palpable insecurity affecting the ability of children to be educated and to thrive.

As a result of these potent dangers, UNICEF and the NGF met at the NGF Secretariat Abuja, on Thursday, July 7th, to brainstorm over immediate solutions to the problem. In the meeting, the Chief of Education, Saadhna Panday and the Education Specialist, Azuka Menkiti discussed areas of collaboration to strengthen Nigeria's educational systems, ensure the safety of school students and ensure that Nigeria's large population of out-of-school children obtain access to education. The UNICEF Chief of Education stated that on top of her list of priorities is school safety in Nigeria.

UNICEF is therefore seeking to obtain support to tackle the

Children hawk on the streets during the day or are idling during school hours. To consider this a social problem is only to view a tip of the iceberg on an hourglass



Juliet Chima, Technical Assistant to the Director-General (NGF), Azuka Menkiti, Education Specialist at UNICEF Nigeria, Mr Asishana B. Okauru, Director-General of the NGF, Saadhna Panday, Chief of Education at UNICEF, Dr Leo the Great, Ebenezer, Head of Education at NGF, Yetunde Oladapo, Legal Officer (NGF)

issue of out-of-school children in Nigeria, the focus being that of the girl-child and Almajiri children. Panday said that Nigeria is significant in fixing the educational problem in the sub-Saharan region because 70% of school children in Nigeria can't read and only 36% are accessing childhood education. Yet only 20% of government expenditure goes to education.

"We must work to improve the volume of spending," said Panday.

Panday said that governors must reconsider their spending on tertiary education and see if there is enough transparency in how the budgets are published.

She emphasized that a National Steering Committee should be set up to ensure that safe schools are upheld.

Furthermore, she stated that as part of the Sustainable Development Goals, UNICEF is working to develop a national roadmap whereby Governors would be able to track their progress in education in various states.

Dr Leo the Great, Ebenezer, Head of Education at the NGF said there is a need to bring together stakeholders to form a formidable force.

He disclosed that, "I have put the process in

place, and I am currently planning to ensure that we bring the necessary stakeholders together, to dialogue."

He revealed to the UNICEF representatives that he is privy to data on education funding across the 36 states, adding that with respect to out-of-school children, we must plan to meet with stakeholders on how to sensitise the states.

"We should collaborate and coordinate, especially in the aspect of funding. That is key to strengthening the development across the states. We are ready to bring a policy proposal to the table on how to move ahead.

The Technical Assistant to the Director-General at NGF, Juliet Chima said the NGF was part of the high-level team that coordinated the submission of state action

plans as it relates to school safety in Nigeria.

Panday added that UNICEF is ready to bring in high-level technical expertise to enable the goals come to fruition.

UNICEF not only wants to bring in their technical expertise but also wants to push advocacy for a public dialogue on education financing, suggesting first that they require an avenue to speak to the Governors and let them know what is on the table.

Lastly, UNICEF disclosed that they are organising an out-of-school outreach conference with the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) as the host. The conference would have a frame of action on the thematic areas of out-of-school children in Nigeria.

They requested to have Governors present and the NGF on board.

The Director-General of the NGF, Mr Asishana B. Okauru, said that NGF would be on-board without hesitation, and promised to ensure that Governors are present as well.



Joseph Uzochukwu, Research Analyst (NGF), Isioma Ononye, Social Media Officer (NGF), Yetunde Oladapo, Legal Officer (NGF), Dr Leo the Great, Ebenezer, Head of Education (NGF), Juliet Chima, Technical Assistant to the Director-General (NGF), Mr Asishana B. Okauru, Director-General of the NGF, Saadhna Panday, Chief of Education at UNICEF



L-R: Director General of the NGF, Mr Asishana Bayo Okauru displaying an NGF Publication with the Senator Muhammad Bima Enagi

Sen. Muhammad Bima Enagi First senator to officially visit NGF Secretariat

The NGF played host to Senator Muhammad Bima Enagi, representing Niger South Senatorial District at the Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture.

The meeting was midwived by the NGF Senior Agricultural Advisor, Professor Abba Gambo who said it is aimed at addressing where NGF as a policy hub can partner with the NASS. Professor Gambo further stated that as a policy hub, there are several areas of collaboration that would be mutually beneficial to the two parties and by extension the nation at large. He also noted there are also many other things that the NGF as the only platform in Nigeria that has the convening power of bringing all the governors together under one roof, can toss up to the front burner of national discourse.

During the meeting, several issues threatening the food security of Nigeria in the coming years were touched, top of which

was the activities of insurgents, bandits and kidnappers who are not just threatening, but killing farmers all year round.

In response, Senator Muhammad said that the issue of security is a cause for concern to everyone in government.

“The government is trying to address the issues of security but there are security challenges everywhere such as in Mali and Niger and the majority of West Africa” he said, stating that the North-Central, West and East are affected as well. The Senator advised that “we must continue to talk to and support the government on these issues.”

Senator Muhammad agreed that there are issues of inconsistencies of government over the years and that is where he would like to bring the NGF in. On the Federal Government’s inconsequential budgetary provisions to the agriculture sector, the Senator declared that there needs to be a common platform that monitors what is spent on Agriculture.





L-R: Senator Mohammad Bima Enagi, Mr Asishana Bayo Okauru, Alhaji A. Shittu and Prof. Abba Gambo in conversation during the visit

adding that the federal government is only in charge of policymaking and funding of research in Agriculture.

Finally, he called for synergy amongst all the agencies to work together and talk to each other.

In his welcome address, the Director General of the Forum, Mr. Asishana Bayo Okauru, warmly told Senator Bima Enagi that he (the Senator) holds the record of being the first Senator ever to officially visit the NGF Secretariat.

Mr. Okauru ran the Senator through the quality of Nigerians that the NGF is incubating and invited the Senator and any known associates of his, who are interested in fixing Nigeria, to approach the NGF with their ideas or initiatives and they would be welcomed with

Overall, The Senator expressed delight with the opportunity to visit the secretariat and listen to the Director-General of the Forum explain the objectives and the role of the forum.

He thanked the NGF and assured it of their cooperation to advance food security in the country. He agreed with the Forum that the states are the most important entities in the agriculture sector hierarchy because states have the land and the farmers, not the Federal Government.

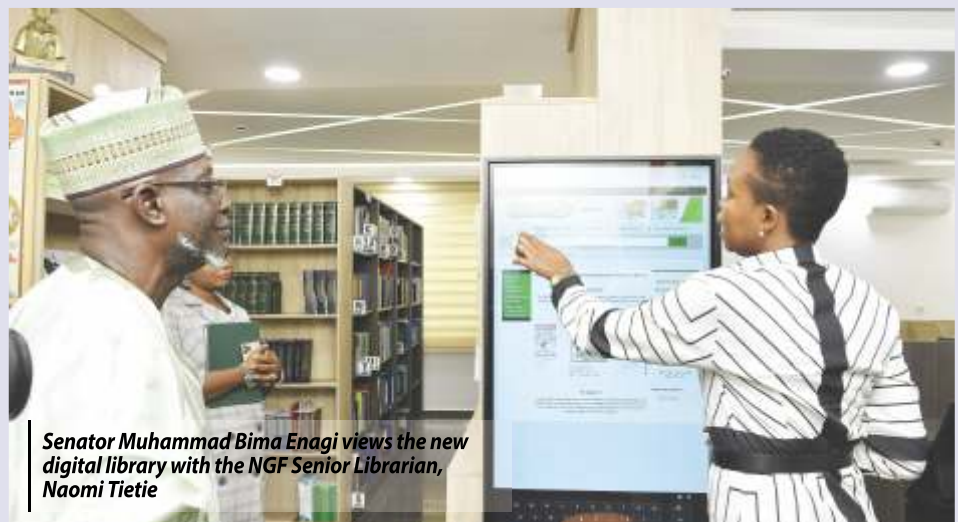
The man who facilitated the visit, Professor Gambo of the NGF, said he looks forward to a collaboration that would wipe away the tears of farmers, to allow them to realise the optimum off their produce, emphasising that the challenges are with the farmers and the solutions can be found in the research institutions.

“You can grant us the leverage of being the go-to-guy between the states and research institutions and have all research findings shared widely for the benefit of the country,” said Prof. Gambo.

To solve some of the challenges in the agriculture sector, Professor Gambo said

he would want to lean on the strength of the senate committee to convene a small stakeholder conference on rural development and infrastructure, to raise awareness on what is happening in the states and to allow farmers, including the rich ones and the peasant ones, to know where to go, to seek

projects of the Forum, and a grounded technocrat, had stated that some of the challenges around the agriculture scene revolve around policy flip-flops and inconsistency, advising that there is need to harmonise the policy framework



Senator Muhammad Bima Enagi views the new digital library with the NGF Senior Librarian, Naomi Tietie

assistance whenever they are in difficulty.

Earlier, the NGF's Executive Director, Strategy and Research, Alhaji Lateef O.T. Shittu, saddled with the responsibility of overseeing all collaborative

currently in place.

“There is a need to harmonise policies and bring them together to promote agricultural development in the country,” he said,

open arms. After walking the Senator round the Secretariat, the NGF Director General thanked the Senator for the visit before inviting him to a photo-session.



NEWS

From the states

NIGER STATE GOVERNOR ABUBAKAR SANI BELLO CONGRATULATES EKITI STATE GOVERNOR-ELECT, OYEBANJI

Niger State Governor and Chairman of North Central States Governor's Forum (NCSGF), Abubakar Sani Bello has congratulated Biodun Oyebanji of the All Progressives Congress (APC) for his landslide victory at the just concluded Ekiti State gubernatorial election.

Governor Sani Bello in a statement said that the victory of the Oyebanji is a clear indication that the APC-led government in Ekiti State and the country at large has executed people-oriented projects.

The Governor added that the governor-elect has significant work to do in complimenting the efforts of Governor Kayode Fayemi as governance is a continuous process.

"I congratulate you on the well-deserved victory, this is a clear testimony that our party is doing the right thing for the people.



Oyebanji

IKPEAZU INAUGURATES SPECIAL SECURITY COMMITTEE FOR UMUNNEOCHI LGA

*...charges them to take over
all ungoverned spaces*

Governor Okezie Ikpeazu has inaugurated a Special Security Committee for Umunneochi Local Government Area with a charge to stamp out strange elements who have no business in their forest and have constituted themselves a security threat.

Inaugurating the Committee at the Government House, Umuahia, Dr. Ikpeazu directed the Committee to take over all ungoverned spaces in Umunneochi and set up systems that will lead to the apprehension of all elements who have become a nuisance to the people of the Council.

The Governor assured that government will provide all that is needed to make their job successful and announced immediate provision of a patrol vehicle and motorcycles to serve as enablers to their assignment.

Governor Ikpeazu assured that he will support the Committee until the story of security changes for the better in the area. He also charged the Committee to take decisive action to flush out all criminals in the area as the land belongs to



Ikpeazu

the people of Umunneochi, adding that they must be firm and that any citizen of the area found to be conniving with the criminals should be identified and dealt with.

The Governor warned that anybody who wants to do business in Umunneochi LGA must come out in the open and charged the Committee to deepen intelligence about what is happening in the area, especially movements around the area.

He further directed them to collaborate with neighboring communities outside Umunneochi in the course of the assignment, promising that the initiative will be extended to Isuikwuato and Ukwu West LGAs.

Responding on behalf of the Committee, the Chairman, Eze Okechukwu Chukwuji thanked the Governor for the initiative which will check insecurity in Umunneochi and assured that they will justify the confidence reposed in them.

The Special Security Committee which has 12 persons as members also has the Commissioner for Information, Dr Eze Chikamayo, as Secretary.

Secretary to Government, Barrister Chris Ezem, Member representing Umunneochi State constituency at the State Assembly, Hon. Okey Igwe, members of the State Executive Council, Executive Chairman of Umunneochi LGA, Chief Ifeanyi Madu, and other top officials of the State Government were present at the event.

BAGUDU APPROVES PAYMENT OF 2021 GRATUITY AND DEATH BENEFITS FOR 1172 VERIFIED BENEFICIARIES

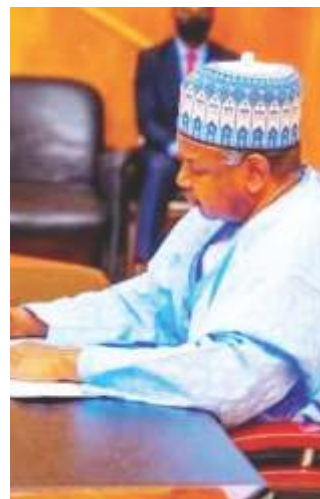
Governor Abubakar Atiku Bagudu of Kebbi State has approved the sum of two billion, nine hundred and eighty one million, eight hundred and fifty six thousand, four hundred and sixty five naira, forty-eight kobo (N2,981,856,465.48) for the payment of gratuity and death benefits for the year 2021.

The payment is to cover for one thousand, one hundred

and seventy-two (1,172) beneficiaries of State, Local Government and Local Government Education Authority (LGEA).

This is contained in a statement signed by the Ag. Head of Service, Alh. Safiyanu Garba Bena and made available to the press.

According to the statement, the latest approval from the Governor was part of the



Bagudu

determined effort of the Kebbi State Government to ensure that all retired workers receive their benefits as at when due.

It will be recalled that, in line with the determined commitment of Senator Abubakar Atiku Bagudu to the welfare of Kebbi State workforce in retirement, that an approval of cumulative amount of N30,280,792,650.04 comprising of N20,105,129,647.54 for the period of 2015 to 2018 and another amount of N10,175,663,002.50 representing the payments of balances of 2017, 2018 and full payments of 2019 to 2021 verified retirees totaling 3,724 was granted.



JUBILATION AS NUC GRANTS ENUGU GOVT LICENSE TO ESTABLISH STATE UNIVERSITY OF MEDICAL AND APPLIED SCIENCES (SUMAS), IGBO-ENO



L-R: Deputy Chief of Staff, Government House, Enugu, Prof. Malachy Okwueze, Governor Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi and Executive Secretary, NUC, Prof. Abubakar Adamu at the NUC headquarters, Abuja

The National Universities Commission (NUC) has granted license to Enugu State Government recognising establishment of the State University of Medical and Applied Sciences (SUMAS), Igbo-Eno, Enugu State.

The license issued to Governor Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi of Enugu State, at NUC headquarters, Abuja, recently, was sequel to the enactment of the State University of Medical and Applied Sciences (SUMAS), Law, Igbo-Eno, Enugu State, on April 13, 2022.

Presenting the license, the Executive Secretary, NUC, Prof. Abubakar Adamu Rasheed, congratulated Gov. Ugwuanyi and the people of the state "on the establishment of the State University of Medical and Applied Sciences to be located in Igbo-Eno of Enugu State".

The Law establishing SUMAS was presented to NUC by Enugu State government alongside the Academic brief and Master Plan of the new University.

The License recognized SUMAS as the second Enugu State owned University.

With the final stage of granting the license, Enugu State will now have a brand new, full-fledged, State-owned University of Medical and Applied Sciences (SUMAS), Igbo-Eno, Enugu State.

SUMAS, Igbo-Eno has become the 59th State University in Nigeria. Enugu State with two State-owned Universities has now joined the league of states with more than one state University.

Reacting, the Deputy Chief of Staff, Government House, Enugu, Prof. Malachy Okwueze, who witnessed the presentation of the license to Gov.

Ugwuanyi at the NUC headquarters, Abuja, said: "We can't thank the Governor Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi of Enugu State enough for achieving this goal of providing the platform for increased access to quality university education for our teeming youths who struggle year after year to gain admission into the university without fulfilling their desires and dreams for university education".

According to him, "This is especially so for professional courses such as medicine. The existing Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT) gets over 2, 000 applications from our youths to study medicine but only a paltry 50 applicants (candidates) are offered access to study medicine at the end.

"Even the University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN), the Federal University in Enugu State, offers only about 180 candidates admission into medicine leaving the dreams of thousands of our youths to study the course dashed year after year.

"This is despite the deficit in the number of medical doctors and nurses required to optimize medical and healthcare for our people".



Bagudu

The Kebbi State Governor, Senator Abubakar Atiku Bagudu has graciously approved financial assistance as support to the successful candidates of Kebbi State into the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), 2022; candidates for Regular Intake into the Nigerian Army and those selected for interview into the Nigerian Defence Academy, 74th Regular Course.

GOVERNOR BAGUDU SUPPORTS CANDIDATES FOR MILITARY AND PARA-MILITARY INSTITUTIONS WITH N17,495,500

This is contained in a statement signed by the Secretary to the State Government, Babale Umar Yauri, and made available to newsmen in Birnin Kebbi on Tuesday.

According to the statement, the gesture is in continuation of Bagudu's sustained support to ensure welfare of the State indigenes.

The Governor gave an approval for the release of seventeen million, four hundred and ninety-five thousand, five hundred, (N17,495,500.00) Naira.



Ugwuanyi



HAJJ 2022: BAGUDU BIDS INTENDING PILGRIMS FAREWELL, URGES THEM TO PRAY FOR NIGERIA

Governor Abubakar Atiku of Kebbi State recently bade farewell to the first batch of intending pilgrims from the State to Saudi Arabia.

Speaking during the epoch making event at Sir Ahmadu Bello International Airport, Birnin Kebbi, Bagudu urged the intending Pilgrims to fervently pray for peace and an end to the insecurity and other challenges facing the country while in the Holy Land .

He announced that the State Government has made adequate arrangements to ensure the security, welfare and comfort of the pilgrims, both in Nigeria and in the holy land.

The Chairman of the APC Governors' Forum also urged them to jealously guard their Basic Traveling Allowance (BTA), as well as all forms of identification while in Saudi Arabia.

He reiterated his call to the intending pilgrims to devote time in praying for themselves, Kebbi State and Nigera in general.

"You should pray for yourselves as well as the urgent restoration of peace and security in all parts of the country.

"Please also pray for the success of President Muhammadu Buhari to continue with the good works he is doing for Nigeria.

"Please also pray against the recurrence of obnoxious health challenges that stopped the performance of hajj by international pilgrims like COVID-19," the governor urged.

He also urged the intending Pilgrims to pray for bumper harvest as the country witnesses the beginning of rainy season .

The Progressive Governors' Forum Chairman, thanked the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of the Federation, Abubakar Malami (SAN) for accepting to serve as the State Amirul Hajj .

The Minister of Justice, Abubakar Malami, SAN, who is also the State Amirul Hajj, commended the state government for reposing tremendous confidence in them as the State's Hajj committee.



Malami assured the intending pilgrims that the committee set up by the state government comprised all types of professionals and technocrats to diligently take care of them, both in Nigeria and Saudi Arabia.

The Minister also appealed to them to guard their BTA and travel documents, especially their international passports.

He also called on the intending pilgrims to desist from taking all prohibited items and illicit drugs, warning, " the punishment for drugs peddling in Saudi Arabia is nothing, but death."

Malami extolled Governor Abubakar Atiku Bagudu for the tremendous development the state has recorded particularly in the rice value

chain and area of investment.

The Chairman of the Pilgrims Welfare Agency, Alhaji Haruna Maitandu, also lauded Gov. Abubakar Atiku for making all the necessary arrangements for the welfare and comfort of the intending pilgrims both in Nigeria and Saudi Arabia.

He thanked the governor for providing necessary financial and moral support to the agency in order to ensure smooth conduct of the exercise.

Maitandu informed the governor that all the departing intending Pilgrims have been given their Basic Travelling Allowances, BTA and other essential documents.

HAJJ: GOVERNOR ABUBAKAR SANI BELLO COMMENDS NIGER STATE INTENDING PILGRIMS FOR THEIR PERSEVERANCE

...Bids farewell to last batch

Governor Abubakar Sani Bello has commended Niger State intending pilgrims for withstanding the vigorous preparation for this year's Hajj exercise.

Governor Sani Bello disclosed this when he visited the last batch of the intending pilgrims at the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja Hajj camp to bid them farewell.

The Governor explained that this year's Hajj preparations had some global challenges due to some reforms adding that the difficulties made Saudi Authority to extend the date.

He however admonished them to consider their experiences as part of the blessings of performing Hajj.

The Governor also explained that the state government did all it could to ensure the

intending pilgrims were airlifted from Minna Airport but that could not be achieved, hence the decision to airlift them from the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport Abuja.

While wishing the intending pilgrims a successful Hajj exercise, Governor Sani Bello urged them to pray for peace in Niger State in particular and Nigeria in general as well as be good ambassadors of the state.

Earlier, the Executive Secretary (ES), Niger State Pilgrims Welfare Board, Umar Makun Lapai said that 2265 pilgrims from the state that paid through the certified bank, have been captured and given Visas to perform this year's Hajj exercise.



Bello



Gov. Lalong exchanging a handshake with Kunle Adeyanju

GOVERNOR LALONG MEETS DIASPORA BIKER KUNLE ADEYANJU; RESTATES COMMITMENT TO POLIO ERADICATION, SPORTS AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Plateau State Governor Simon Bako Lalong has received Kunle Adeyanju the diaspora biker who rode from London to Nigeria.

Kunle who is in Jos as part of his advocacy for the fight against Polio met with Governor Simon Lalong at the oldest golf course in Nigeria, Rayfield 1913.

He said he is still going round the country to encourage Nigerians to keep on doing what they have done to fight against Polio so that the disease will not come back again.

Adeyanju stated that just last week, Polio was recorded in the UK and also reiterated the fact that Malawi, Cote D'Ivoire and Togo still have Polio. Therefore it is very important for the country to sustain its efforts to permanently kick polio out of Nigeria so that Polio will never return.

Governor Lalong congratulated Kunle Adeyanju for a successful trip from London and also welcomed him to Plateau State, describing him as a hero and worthy ambassador of the nation.

Lalong also appreciated his effort in fighting against Polio, a disease which he said did a lot of damage to Nigeria and took a very long time to be checkmated.

The Governor also told him that he is a major donor in the fight against Polio by being a member of the Rotary International, a body that has led in the fight against Polio globally.

He assured him that the

send out the correct information about the fact that a new Plateau that is peaceful, accommodating and investor- friendly has emerged out of the sustained efforts of the Rescue Administration.

Government of Plateau State will continue to do its best to not only address polio related matters, but also handle other diseases that pose a threat to public health and safety.

Lalong also told Adeyanju that his administration has continued to create the right atmosphere for tourism and sports to thrive thereby making it possible for more people to visit Plateau State for leisure and business.

He also used the opportunity to appeal to Adeyanju to use the benefit of his visit to Plateau State to



DECONGESTION OF CORRECTIONAL CENTRES: GOV GANDUJE RELEASES 3,898 INMATES IN 7 YEARS

In compliance with President Muhammadu Buhari's call for decongestion of Correctional Centres, governor Abdullahi Umar Ganduje released a total number of 3,898 inmates across Kano centres within a period of seven years.

The exercise is conducted through the State Prerogative of Mercy Committee at the intervals of Sallah festivities.

He effects such releases during Sallah celebrations.

The 90 inmates who were released today were among the released 3,898, as he disclosed during today's visit to Gorondutse Correctional Centre, Saturday, Sallah Day.

Governor Ganduje assured that he would continue with the good work up to 2023 when his administration ends.

"This exercise is in compliance with President Muhammadu Buhari's urge for decongestion of our correctional centres, he added."

Inmates were sighted hailing the governor for his merciful tendencies throughout his administration.

"We will continue with this good initiative. And at the same time I assure you that the process will continue even after I left office.

"When my Deputy, Nasiru Yusuf Gawuna, who is the gubernatorial candidate of our great party, APC, wins come 2023," he disclosed.

In his brief remarks the Controller of Kano Correctional Centres, Sulaiman M. Inuwa, hailed Governor Ganduje, revealing further that, "In my 30 years of working experience, I have never come across a governor who did something close to this."



EID-EL-KABIR: GOVERNOR SIMON LALONG ADVOCATES UNITY, LOVE AND BROTHERHOOD

Plateau State Governor and Chairman Northern Governors' Forum Simon Bako Lalong has felicitated with the Muslim Ummah as they join their counterparts worldwide to celebrate Eid-El-Kabir.

Governor Lalong in a Sallah message congratulated the Muslim Ummah for commemorating another significant event in the Muslim calendar which brings to fore the message of sacrifice, love, tolerance and unity as preached by the Holy Prophet (PBH).

The Governor urged Muslims to celebrate this significant spiritual event by reflecting on the issues that Nigeria has been confronted with such as insecurity, intolerance, religious bigotry, ethnic bias and poverty among others that can only be tackled when there is unity, collaboration and sacrifice among all Nigerians.

He said the matters that are weighing down national progress are such that Nigerians must look beyond parochial and selfish interests to enable people from all strata of society get equal opportunities contribute to solutions irrespective of their backgrounds.



Lalong

SALLAH: BAGUDU FELICITATES WITH KEBBI PEOPLE

...assures farmers of support against quelea birds

Governor Abubakar Atiku Bagudu of Kebbi State has felicitated with President Muhammadu Buhari and people of Kebbi State on the Eid-el-Kabir Sallah celebration.

The Governor, flanked by the Minister of Justice, Attorney General of the Federation, Abubakar Malami (SAN) and Commissioners expressed gratitude to Allah for this memorable event.

'I wish to express gratitude to Allah for showing us this day of Eid-el-Kabir Sallah 2022.

'I wish to extend my warm greetings to President Muhammadu Buhari, all people of Kebbi State and leaders across the country'.

"We join others in praying that all the prayers across the country are accepted by Allah and we are indeed thankful to Allah



Bagudu

for His blessings to us. We pray that Allah bring peace and mercy upon us", he averred.

The Chairman Progressive Governors' Forum, Senator Abubakar Atiku Bagudu, while thanking Allah for the setting in of the rainy season also assured farmers in the state of the readiness of Government to address the attack of quelea birds ravaging rice farms in some parts of the state.

EID EL KABIR: GOV. BELLO FELICITATES WITH MUSLIMS

...calls for collective sacrifice from leaders, citizens

Kogi State governor, Yahaya Bello has felicitated with Muslim faithfuls all across the globe and particularly Kogi state on the occasion of the 2022 Eid el Kabir celebration, while he called for collective sacrifices in the nation's interest

He added that leaders at the helms of affairs and citizens must begin to put aside individual interests in a bid to ensure that our country reaches the



pinnacle of development where it belonged.

Governor Bello stated this in a special Eid el Kabir commemoration message which was signed on Friday by his Chief Press Secretary, Muhammed Onogwu.

The Governor noted that this festive season was another time to seek God's face as it concerns the affairs of our dear nation, which was not only facing hard times in the areas of insecurity but largely affected by the global, regional and national

plunging economic realities.

He added that Muslims aside from exemplifying a life of sacrifice and submission just like Prophet Ibrahim did, should as well extend their arm of benevolence and kindness to their neighbors irrespective of their tribe or religion.

Governor Bello stressed that while it has become common knowledge that in Kogi state, citizens have being implored to close the gaps of differences, seasons like this enable individuals to put to practice many of these attributes.

IKPEAZU SALUTES ABIA MUSLIMS



Ikpeazu

The Governor of Abia State, Dr. Okezie Ikpeazu has sent a message of goodwill to all Muslims in Abia State on the occasion of this year's EID EL KABIR.

Governor Ikpeazu described the occasion as a time to remember and commemorate Allah's great sacrifice for the world and urged Muslims in the State to imbibe the lessons and virtues of sacrifice, forgiveness and love for one

another.

The Governor used the opportunity to restate the determination of his administration to deal decisively with those who are behind the spate of criminality and kidnappings around Umunneochi LGA and its environs, and assured all citizens of the State of equal treatment irrespective of tribe and religion.

He further assured that

his administration shall continue to uphold the Rights to Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion of every citizen by respecting their rights to worship provided that such rights will be exercised lawfully and in accordance with prevailing laws.

The Governor, on behalf of the Government and People of Abia State wished all Muslims a peaceful Sallah celebrations.



FAYEMI GREETES MUSLIMS AT SALLAH, URGES PRAYERS FOR NIGERIA

Ekiti State Governor, Dr. Kayode Fayemi, has felicitated with Muslims in the state and in the country at large as they join other faithful around the world to celebrate this year's Eid-el-Kabir festival.

Dr. Fayemi, in a statement by his Chief Press Secretary, Mr. Yinka Oyebo, urged the Muslim Ummah to uphold lessons of love, loyalty and sacrifice which are the foundation of the festival, during and after the festivities.

The Governor noted that the Eid-el-Kabir became a symbolic event following the bountiful reward Prophet Ibrahim received for his demonstrated perseverance and absolute faith in God by holding tenaciously to his faith during the trying period.

Dr. Fayemi said this year's Eid-el-Kabir festival offers another opportunity for sober reflection and spiritual renewal which Allah demands from the faithful.

He urged the Muslim faithful and adherents of other faiths in the country to make peaceful coexistence their watchword and work together for a more peaceful, united and prosperous Nigeria.

According to him, Nigerians need to imbibe the lessons of commitment, dedication and obedience to higher authority as demonstrated in Prophet Ibrahim's willingness to sacrifice his son in deference to the will of God, which Eid-el-Kabir commemorates.



Fayemi

"This symbolic Islamic festival is a constant reminder to us that, there will always be great rewards when we have abiding faith and patience during trying periods and remain persistent in prayers.

"It also reminds us of the sacrifice we are to make not only for spiritual fulfilment but for the development of our society and advancement of humanity. Development and progress would only be achieved in an atmosphere of peace, unity and mutual respect. We must, therefore, eschew situations that can further divide us as a people."

He also urged Muslim faithful to pray

GOVERNOR ABUBAKAR SANI BELLO URGES MUSLIM UMMAH TO RENEW COMMITMENT ON PEACE AND PROGRESS OF THE NATION

...Felicitates with them on Eid-El-Kabir Sallah celebration

Niger State Governor and Chairman North Central States Governor's Forum NCSGF Abubakar Sani Bello has felicitated with the Muslim Ummah in the state as they joined their brothers and sisters all over the world to celebrate Eid-El-Kabir.

In a Sallah goodwill message, the Governor urged Muslims to renew their commitment to the pursuit of peace and progress of the country noting that the society will be a better place to live in for everyone if there is relative social equilibrium.

He enjoined the Ummah to imbibe the virtues of obedience, tolerance, faith, perseverance and sacrifice as exemplified by Prophet Ibrahim (A.S.).

The Governor said Muslim faithful must use the period and pray for an end to the incessant security challenges that has bedeviled the state in particular and the country as a whole.

Governor Sani Bello called on followers of all religions to tolerate one another and assist the less privileged in the society as one of the surest ways of reducing poverty and the attendant insecurity that comes with it.

According to him, humanity is fast losing its essence because of the obvious disregard to the teachings and practise of our religions.



Bello

for peace in the country, as they perform the Arafat rites, noting that the fervent prayers by various religious bodies and individuals have accounted largely for the relative peace and progress recorded in recent times.

"I extend warm greetings to the Muslim Ummah in Nigeria as they celebrate Eid-el-Kabir Sallah festival. I wish the good people of Ekiti State and Nigeria the joy, peace and blessing of the season.

"As we celebrate, let us remember the poor and the needy in line with God's injunction to be our brother's keeper. Quite importantly, it is also a time to pray for our dear country to overcome current security and economic challenges", he added.

SALLAH: ORTOM CALLS FOR PRAYERS TO HEAL THE LAND

...says the recent security onslaughts vindicate him



Ortom

Governor Samuel Ortom of Benue State has called on Muslims in the country to pray against the unabating security challenges in the country, saying that the deteriorating situation arguably demands divine intervention.

The Governor said it is an understatement to submit that the nation is overwhelmed by the security challenges and cited the recent terrorists attack on Kuje Custodial Center and the attack on President Muhammadu Buhari's convoy as "a national embarrassment."

In his goodwill message to Nigerians to commemorate this year's Eid Kabir celebration, he also urged the citizens to cooperate with security operatives in order to get rid of the security menace ravaging the nation.

The Governor however lamented that his ceaseless calls on the federal government to rise up to its responsibility by providing security for the citizens have fell on deaf ears over the years.



GOVERNOR ABUBAKAR SANI BELLO STOPS CONVOY TO ASSIST ACCIDENT VICTIMS AT PAIKO

Governor Abubakar Sani Bello of Niger State while returning from Abuja, where he had engagements, stopped his convoy at Paiko, the headquarters of Paikoro local government to assist accident victims.

The accident was between a Mercedes 200 conveying a family of five, travelling to Ilorin, Kwara State and a motorcycle that was overloaded with passengers.

Three out of the five people on the motorcycle had fractures while the other two sustained injuries.

However, those in the Mercedes 200 did not sustain any injury.

The Governor who sympathized with the traumatized victims directed that those who had fractures should be taken to Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida (IBB) Specialist Hospital Minna for treatment.

He also asked one of his aides to ensure the immediate repairs of the car.

Governor Sani Bello further enjoined the Paiko Divisional Police Station to see to the safety of the driver of the vehicle who had reported himself to the station.

Occupants of the vehicle could not hold back their tears as they were overwhelmed by the kind gesture of the Governor.



Sani Bello



NORTHERN GOVERNORS MEET MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE OVER NLTP/L-PRES IMPLEMENTATION AND SECURITY FOR FARMERS

The Northern Governors' Forum has met with the Minister of Agriculture Dr. Mohammed Mahmood Abubakar over the National Livestock Transformation Programme and the State Level Project Socialisation on Livestock Productivity and Resilience Support Project (L-PRES), in the region.

The meeting held at the Transcorp Hilton Abuja was chaired by Simon Bako Lalong, Chairman of the Forum and Governor of Plateau State. It was attended by Governors of Kwara, Niger, Kebbi, Kaduna and Deputy Governors of Benue, Kogi, Bauchi and Nasarawa States.

Speaking to journalists after the meeting held behind closed doors, Governor Simon Lalong said the engagement was necessitated by the concern of the Northern Governors over the implementation of the programmes which have direct bearing on the lives of the people.

He said the Governors are worried over the slow pace of the

implementation of the National Livestock Transformation Programme which was conceived to tackle the challenges confronting herdsmen and farmers.

He said because agriculture is the main stay of the North, the Forum welcomes the introduction of the new outfit Livestock, Productivity and Resilience Project (L-PRES) which it believes compliments the NLTP and will yield a positive result.

Lalong explained that the meeting was fruitful as the Governors got assurances from the Minister of Agriculture that the Federal Government will continue implementing all programmes in partnership with the States for the benefit of the people.

On security for farmers, he explained that the implementation of the programmes would also help in addressing the security challenges which farmers were experiencing in their farming activities.

He said "We are not sleeping. The issue of insecurity as it has been a matter of concern where in some places farming activities have been interrupted. We are working with other stakeholders especially the security agencies to see how to help farmers. This is the time that farmers would need a lot of our support and assurance to produce food for the nation".

The chairman also explained that the meeting discussed the revamping of the textile industry through the Northern Nigerian Development Company as a way of addressing unemployment and crime.



FIRST 100 DAYS IN OFFICE

State of the State Briefing to Ndi Anambra by Governor Charles Chukwu-ma Soludo, CFR: June 25, 2022

Umunnem Ndi Anambra!

We have just clocked our first 100 days in office since you employed me and Dr. Onyekachukwu Ibezim to serve you as Governor and Deputy Governor respectively. I am not a fan of the fad about the first 100 days. I prefer to give you comprehensive annual reports and I look forward to the first one in March 2023. However, as a responsive government and as part of our periodic citizens' engagement, we are providing this briefing on this short term milestone. We will also periodically brief and engage you as our employers, through interactive phone-in radio programmes.

As promised, we hit the ground running from the first minute after swearing-in; working for 8 hours and 45 minutes on that day, starting with a three and a half hours meeting on security. Since then, I go to the office every day and literally working 24/7 to make you proud. To be sure, the last 100 days have been bumpy and challenging as expected, with insecurity and a red treasury being the most portent, as clearly identified in our inaugural address.

Since February 2022, the contribution of oil revenue from NNPC to the federation account has been zero and many states have difficulty paying salaries. Thus, with declining revenue in the context of insecurity and a mountain of debt (including over N20 billion in arrears of gratuity to pensioners since 2018) vis-à-vis the sky-high expectations from you (my employers), some fundamental disruptive changes are inevitable. I remind everyone who

has tried to commiserate with me that I consciously applied for this job, and there will be no excuses. We thank you, Umunnem, for your continued solidarity and support. Together, Anambra will win!

We have spent the last 100 hundred days addressing some key foundational issues: appointed, swore-in and organized a retreat for a new cabinet within five weeks; launched the campaign to mobilize our people to take back our state from criminals and head-on systematic and comprehensive attack on insecurity to restore law and order; revised 2022 budget and provided unprecedented allocation of 64% for capital/infrastructural development as well as priority for youth development; declared a state of emergency on roads and traffic and preparing to flag-off the construction of over 220 kilometres of roads as the rains subside; getting touts out of our roads and markets; redefining the purpose and character of government focused upon service delivery as well as prudent and transparent fiscal management; ending the phenomenon of schools without teachers and hospitals without doctors by embarking on an ambitious, open and competitive process to recruit thousands of teachers as well as doctors, pharmacists and nurses for our hospitals; cleaning up the mountains of waste on our roads; working to ensure that entry into and exit from Anambra especially at Amansea and bridge-head Onitsha become pleasurable experience; signaling our urban renewal agenda with illustrative ambitious agenda for cleaning and modernizing Okpoko and Onitsha metropolis as well as other urban centres which will take greater vigor after the rainy season; laying the foundation for our everything technology and technology everywhere agenda; restructuring and digitizing our Internal Revenue Service; designing and approving a regime for a GIS and digitization of our land registry; launching a policy of never owing gratuity to new retirees and gradually paying down the backlog for the State civil service and approving same for local governments; etc.

In sum, let me assure you that so far, so bumpy but so good! Most people attest that the grave insecurity is being significantly contained, and we are unrelenting. All eyes are on the ball and we are determined to ensure that despite the daunting challenges, our State will remain on course to a livable and prosperous smart homeland. We remain focused on implementing the Soludo Solution—The People's Manifesto, with its five driving pillars: Security, Law and Order; Economic Transformation Agenda; Social Agenda; Governance, Rule of Law and Value System; and Environment—towards a clean, green and planned sustainable communities, markets and cities. Below, we summarize some of the initiatives we have begun within the first 100 days under these pillars as follows.

Full address on www.nggovernorsforum.org



A POPE IN POLITICS

Governor Soludo's First 100 Days in Office

Although he denies subscribing to the hundred days ritual, Governor Charles Chukwuma Soludo benchmarked his hundred days with a clear sermon; I've come to work. In an interview with TVC, the abridged version of which we reproduce here, Soludo spoke like the pope of Anambra politics, sermonising on all facets of governance, including IGR, security and the environment, and promising not just to make Anambra a smart state but also to rid it of criminality.

My first 100 days have been a bit bumpy, challenging but ultimately good. The people of Anambra employed me. When I applied, I knew the challenges ahead and even in my inaugural address, I spelt out several, including the humongous security challenges.

I'm just doing what people employed me to do.

The inaugural speech was to remind us that governance is about service. I haven't seen anyone who shows up on their first day in office with drums at the gate to assume office. This is a poor society. Nigeria is a poor country. It's a country of just about \$2000 and with the exchange rate, it becomes less.

On my first day, the first three and a half hours were devoted to serious meetings with the Security Chiefs and trying to dimension all the problems and the solutions. I met with all the teams. I made key appointments on that day. I met with various stakeholders and tried to get the government together.

For me, being in office is a 24/7

operation. We have a manifesto that we intend to implement every inch of. The manifesto sits on five key pillars despite challenges. We must give our best to demonstrate to our people, our commitment and desire.

I didn't come to this role to say that I'm Governor. I don't even refer to myself as Your Excellency. I've come to work. To clean the gutters. To carry the waste. To bring law and order. To fix the economic well-being that will lead to economic transformation. To have a new social order and the human capital that goes along with it. Also, to have a new governance structure with the rule of law and a new value system.

Then, there is the importance of having the right environment which is the number one existential threat to the people of Anambra. That is what they hired me to do.

I get to wake up each morning and run 24/7 with the team, now getting fully aligned to the mission and vision and character of the governance which is service delivery to the people. We are employees of the people.

They are the boss, and we are the employees and that's what this thing is all about.

Agenda for Anambra State

The program that we came up with is used as a foundation that we campaign with. Our social contract with the Anambra people.

We have three operating documents that we use to guide us. Number one is The Soludo Solution, the people's manifesto. That is the foundation. We have the Anambra Vision (2017) which I chaired when we produced it, visualising what Anambra would look like in fifty years' time. The transitional committee reports. These three documents guide us.

We are determined to take this literally as our contract that we must deliver on. The transition document and the manifesto are all interwoven. It is one major broad document that is always sitting in front of us and everyone in government signs on to deliver on this.

Strategy for IGR

Anambra is growing rapidly into a huge, urban metropolis. More than 60 % per cent of Anambra is now modernised. Everywhere is

We have the Anambra Vision (2017) which I chaired when we produced it, visualising what Anambra would look like in fifty years' time



getting built up, albeit in a haphazard manner. Our agenda in the environment is to have clean, green cities, markets, and communities.

The first main agenda that speaks to the manifesto is law and order. We need to restore security, law, and order to Anambra. That is why we are taking the criminals head-on. Now, they have realised our resolve and determination to bring peace and quiet and law back to the mainland.

Also, we have an urban regeneration program. Clean up the place and make it a liveable and prosperous place. Bringing the markets, and residential areas back to life.

A critical aspect of what we are doing in today's world is IGR. Oil is out. The oil that used to contribute 70 per cent of government revenue is now down to zero. Government must now get back to the basics.

The critical driver of our agenda is everything technology. We are digitising our revenue generation effort. We have a slogan that anything we can't get digitally, we forgo it. We have a

fast-paced process of digitising everything. We intend to roll out a new agenda in terms of revenue collection which is digital. Our goal is to build a liveable and prosperous homeland. With oil money out, we have got to pay our bills.

We promise to the people of Anambra that for every penny that is put in our hands, we would let them know what it is used for. Value for money, that is where we are headed.

How do You Bring Anambra to the World or the world to Anambra?

Anambra is a hub. That's what made Onitsha become one of the largest markets in West Africa. We have boundaries with the north, through Kogi, we have in the south-south through Delta and Rivers and boundaries with the three other south-east states with the River Niger passing through. We want to transform Anambra's economy from a predominantly informal trading post to an industrial/ tech, leisure hub of Nigeria and Africa.

In today's world, you can't be so inward-looking and especially with oil, what you can get to the rest of the world and what the rest of the world can get will create dynamism. We want Anambra to transform from a mega-city to an international city that is open for business with the rest of the world. We are working very hard to sell Made in Anambra products.

We are hoping to have an international cargo airport status. We are also putting together an export emporium and trying to apply for an EPZ status. We can begin to aggregate what is made in Anambra and showcase what our people can do. Then, we get into technology with the rest of the world.

We have a clear agenda, and we work to get Anambra to become a smart, megacity that is also an international city.

Security

When I assumed office, I said that I am prepared to dialogue with everyone who has something to offer. In that process, we met with the clergy, we met with the town unions. We met with the traditional rulers, women groups, and youths. We even had a security summit. I tried to meet with all disparate groups and appealed. Gave amnesty. We would try to rehabilitate others because it is evident that several criminal activities have advanced because it's lucrative. Every criminal gang claims to be a liberation movement as it were.

I was happy to hear Nnamdi Kanu denounce criminality and express regret over the way things have turned. They have condemned the criminality going on and disassociated themselves from it. For criminals, we are giving them a run for their money. Nowhere in Anambra would they be safe. No forest. No bush. No home. No house. If we catch you in the house, we will pull that house down.





David Nabena, Chief Economist, NGF and Hajiya Fatima Y. Usman, Head of Legislative, Peace and Inclusive Security Unit, NGF at the National Assembly Hearing On Volume, Capacity of PMS

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY HEARING ON VOLUME, CAPACITY OF PMS

NGF LEGISLATIVE LIAISON And an audacious love for Nigeria

The public hearing on the sale and supply of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) in the country did not start on a good note. Most of the critical stakeholders did not show up and were thus in dereliction on their duty to come forward and render account of their stewardship.

Represented by the Speaker of the House of Reps, Hon. Femi Gbajabamila expressed his disappointment with these vital organizations linked to the matter at hand and arrogantly failing to attend the hearing. These said organizations include Central Bank of Nigeria, NNPC and Ministry of State for Petroleum Resources, amongst others.

He stated during the hearing, “I want to make it very clear that it is not acceptable to the parliament, that people, organizations that are saddled with the responsibility of managing the critical sectors of the economy with such vital assignments like the distribution and accounting for the distributed and sale of PMS in this country, will be reluctant to come forward to render account.”

The legislative hearing on the need to ascertain the actual daily consumption of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) in Nigeria took place at National Assembly on the 5th of July 2022, as a follow up to the resolution of the House of Representatives at its sitting of Thursday 27th January 2022, which set up an ad-hoc committee to investigate the actual daily consumption of PMS in Nigeria and report back for legislative action.

The attention of the House of Representative in the motion was drawn to the recurrence of fuel scarcity as well as the large sums of money being paid to various shadowy conglomerates, companies and individuals as oil subsidy and the inaccuracy of data required for the supply and distribution of PMS.

This hearing aimed to take account of the fuel being distributed and consumed daily in Nigeria. The aim is to interrogate and assess the value chain which, it is hoped, would be accounted for. Resultantly, various key stakeholders in the industry that are relevant to the hearing were invited to express their viewpoints





► on the matter.

In fairness to this HOR Committee, it demanded an overview of the entire situation and as such refused to restrict its interrogation to just the NNPC (The Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation).

The organizations invited to the hearing are as follows. NNPC, Ministry of Petroleum Resources, Ministry of Finance, Nigerian Customs Service, Nigerian Navy Rep, Nigeria Governors' Forum, Central Bank of Nigeria, Petroleum Tech. Development Fund, Nigerian Labour Congress, Petroleum and Product Marketing Company, Exports and Petroleum Market Association, Dangote Petroleum Refinery, Major Oil Markets Association of Nigeria, National Union, National Bureau of Statistics, Federal Road Safety Commission, Office of Accountant General of the Federation, National Association of Road Transport Workers, Nigerian Association of Shippers and a few more organizations. Unfortunately, a few of the most critical stakeholders in this conversation ignored the invitation and thus were not in attendance at the hearing. Nonetheless, those in

attendance weighed-in with their standpoints on the matter. The Nigeria Governors' Forum, which happened to be one of the invitees has had several such consultative engagement with all the stakeholders mentioned above and had at different times sat down with the nation's workers and other groups to look at the figures. They never added up.

Represented at the hearing by its Head of Legislative Liaison Hajiya Fatima Usman Katsina, the NGF warned that it stood solidly behind subsidy removal and that if things continued the way they are some states, not all may be unable to pay salaries. This assertion raised the roof, but the truth has been told.

Hajiya Fatima derived her point from a two-year old NGF committee report dubbed the Nasiru el-Rufai committee report which to date has not seen the light of day. The report however, unraveled a myriad

of bumpy and inexplicable items that the NNPC had presented repeatedly whenever the matter arose. The Head, Legislative liaison of the NGF also mentioned the non-remittance of proceeds of oil to the nation's coffers by the NNPC. This, as at the time Hajiya Fatima made her submissions was hitting its sixth month.

In a conversation on the matter, the Director-General of the NGF, Mr. Asishana Bayo Okauru corroborated the NGF submission saying the NGF holds its credibility in very high esteem and nothing that is contained in what Fatima read is untrue. In fact, he added the Governors have always lent their weight behind non-payment of subsidy. That put paid to the argument that the NGF was letting the cat out of the bag prematurely.

By the end of the hearing,

the Independent Petroleum Marketers Association of Nigeria (IPMAN) made a list of specific requests to the relevant organizations in which they had to respond and will be followed by a ruling from the committee in the near future.

The IPMAN's request included Pricing template for PMS published since 2015 to date and justification for those price increases; List of all depots and tank farms and their capacity; all fuel stations and storage facilities capacity, including record of sales from 2015 to-date, Records of sales of PMS from all depots and tank farms since 2015 to-date and records of all PMS imported and evidence of inspection certificates. The committee and invited organizations will reconvene at a date to be decided, after all requests have been met and communicated.

I want to make it very clear that it is not acceptable to the parliament, that people, organizations that are saddled with the responsibility of managing the critical sectors of the economy with such vital assignments like the distribution and accounting for the distributed and sale of PMS in this country, will be reluctant to come forward to render account



Hajiya Fatima Usman Katsina
Head of Legislative Liaison, NGF



WHO IS ?

BIODUN ABAYOMI OYEBANJI

Biodun Abayomi Oyebanji was born on December 21, 1967, in Ikogosi-Ekiti, and last served as the Secretary to the Government of Ekiti State. He began his academic journey at Baptist Primary School, Ikogosi-Ekiti.

He acquired a Bachelor of Science (BSc.) degree in Political Science from the Ondo State University (now Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti) in 1989 and continued his quest for honours at the University of Ibadan, Oyo State in 1992 where he bagged his Masters' Degree (M.Sc) in Political Science (International Relations & Strategic Studies).

Oyebanji started his professional career as a Lecturer at the Department of Political Science, University of Ado Ekiti, where he worked for four years (1993 – 1997) and later proceeded to work as Manager, Treasurer, and Financial Services officer at the defunct Omega Bank Plc (now Heritage Bank) till May 1999. Oyebanji is engaged in Agribusiness and is the chairman of Con Dois Farms Ltd.

As a successful businessman and a devoted public servant, Abiodun Oyebanji has earned many awards including the Distinguished Alumnus Award by the Alumni Association of

the then Ondo State University, Ado-Ekiti, and the Certificate of Excellence awarded by the National Association of Political Science Students (NAPSS), Ondo State University, Ado-Ekiti. Writing the history of politics and governance in Ekiti State is incomplete without mentioning the critical contributions of Abiodun Oyebanji.

He was Special Assistant (Parliamentary Affairs) to the Governor of Ekiti State (8th June 1999 – July 2000); Special Adviser (Parliamentary Affairs) to the Governor of Ekiti State (1st Aug. 2000 – Sept. 2001); Chief of Staff to the Governor of Ekiti State (September 2001 – May 29, 2003); Chairman, Governing Board, Citizenship and Leadership Training Centre, Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development (June 2009 – December 2010); Commissioner, Ministry of Integration and Inter-Governmental Affairs, Ekiti State (23rd December 2010 – December 2011); Head, Office of Transformation Strategy and Delivery (OTSD), Ekiti State (December 2011 – 9th January 2013); Commissioner, Ministry of Budget, Economic Planning and Service Delivery, Ekiti State (10th January 2013 – 16th October 2014); Secretary, Ekiti State Government (16th October 2018 – Till date).

Oyebanji was instrumental to the

creation of Ekiti State in 1996 as he served as Member, Committee for the Creation of Ekiti State, and Secretary, Committee for the Creation of Ekiti State (1996). He was also Secretary, Ekiti State Development Fund.

Governor-elect Abiodun says he is a product of Ekiti State and he is, therefore, grateful for the opportunities he was given.



Oyebanji

State did not start today. I have spent a lifetime in public service, serving our great State in different capacities, starting in 1994 when I was secretary

He is determined to provide the people of Ekiti with opportunities that can make a difference in their lives.

“My commitment to the development and progress of our

gaining strong competence and experience in governance, transformation strategy, budgets, economic planning and service delivery, youth and sports development and human capital development.

“There are very few areas that my service of Ekiti has not exposed me to. Still, I recognise that the best position from which to make a difference is from the front - and I am humbled to be in the position to put my experience, network, and competence to use, as I ask for the chance to serve you, as Governor of Ekiti State.”

for the Ekiti State creation committee,” he said.

He has served in three Governments in various capacities, a privilege that has given him the knowledge, insight, and experience to be considered suitable to be the next Governor of Ekiti State.

He stated that he has served his people diligently,

I am humbled to be in the position to put my experience, network, and competence to use, as I ask for the chance to serve you, as Governor of Ekiti State



MIRO: Bye-bye rolling stone

Going by what I know of Firo, within the short span of our knowing each other at the NGF, which, cumulatively would be a little over five years, she (Mama-Firo) is a rolling stone.

Her globe-trotting employment history gives teeth to the above assertion. Firo has worked in the world's biggest logistic company in the USA and later Dubai before berthing at the NGF. Technically, Firo brings home to Nigeria, the style known to be the

So, when Firo decided that she was bidding her final farewell to the NGF family, not many drifted far from the fact that Firo is on the roll again, but all are sure that whatever Firo is setting her sights on, is the best for her.

I call Firo Mama Firo, not as imitation of her adorable son, Mikaya, but because whenever there is a project in the NGF, she breaks in at the most inauspicious time and suggests a correction. She starts by jokingly implying the correction and as things progressed, her mood changes from friendly to dexterous and eventually if her suggestion is not effected, assumes the mother-figure leading to her walking away with a firm and resolute indication that it is her way or the highway. And that works.

The NGF will miss Firo. Her ability to organise at short notice, her determination to ensure that all opinions are discussed in a brainstorming session and the best chosen, put a stamp of authority on Firo's performance but all of that is nothing compared her dedication to outstanding outcomes. NGF has benefitted immensely from Firo's global experience. To call her confident or courageous is to belittle her stature at the workplace. She had organised different global programmes of the NGF from the governors' induction to the China trip of 2018, flowing down to the NGFs participation at the AIM Conference in Dubai in 2022.

Without doubt, Firo has come to the NGF, seen

and. In the comments at Chopsticks where Firo, in tears, heard the valedictories of her colleagues, it became obvious that she was leaving behind a family that will always be happy to, anytime she re-emerges, open their

doors to her. As part of the reform team that the management of the Forum put together and as secretary of the Delivery Unit, she proved beyond any iota of doubt that she would be hard to replace at any workplace which does not possess the eagle-eye- scrutiny of the NGF that people go through before they are engaged.

The NGF wishes her success in her future endeavour, and will never forget that when the highway becomes the right way, one would have been talking to Firo, Alhassan Kaka.



Dr. Abdulkarim Obaje, National Coordinator NG-CARES presenting a gift bag to Firo Elhassan



Firo Elhassan and Mrs. Aisha Abdullahi of Bank of Industry



Ajogbasile Olanrewaju, Senior Programme Manager, Help Desk and SFTAS, Juliet Chima, Technical Assistant to the Director General and Eghosa M. Omoigui, Head, Stakeholder Relationship

sole property of an expatriate. She is a workaholic, a consummate technocrat and wordlessly unassuming. This is noticeable in the way she delivers her assignments. The testimony of the technical partners that came to wish Firo success in her future endeavour, at the farewell dinner organised by the Executive Director, Research and Strategy, Alhaji Abdullateef Shittu, spoke volumes. Mrs. Aisha Abdullahi, Bank of Industry and Dr. Abdulkarim Obaje, National Coordinator NG-CARES spoke and each attested to Firo's penchant, in whatever she does, for getting the best outcomes.



SITUATING THE PHC FUND CHALLENGE

Primarily healthcare is the day-to-day care needed to protect, maintain, or restore the health of a nation. For most people, it is both their first point of contact with the healthcare system or their most frequently used health service. The concept of primary healthcare, according to Dr Ahmad Abdulwahab, Senior Health Advisor at the Nigeria Governors' Forum Secretariat, is that it simply is fit to be the mother of all healthcare delivery.

In the last few decades, we have seen a deterioration in primary healthcare services, infrastructure, and related healthcare indices in Nigeria evidenced in the volume of medical tourism that we see. Currently, many challenges are impeding the nation's desire to achieve health for all. This makes the need to review primary healthcare strategies in the country imperative.

As healthcare support systems, NGF and donor partners, particularly UNICEF, are embarking on a very robust effort that wants all hands-on-deck. This assignment focuses on the challenge for the Primary Healthcare System in the current scenario and in future.

While the primary healthcare (PHC) services in Nigeria looked appropriate to the needs of the population in the 1970s and 1980s, the changing burden of disease and shifting demand patterns have rendered the existing PHC system no longer sustainable for meeting current and emerging demands.

This has serious implications for the PHC system in the country, which has clearly been lagging in addressing high levels of communicable diseases, maternal deaths, infant mortality, and appears even less prepared to address the emerging challenges of noncommunicable diseases (NCD).

Nigeria can draw on the experiences of its doctors and the commitments of its governors to drive PHC to another level. With the very robust effort of the Health Team of the NGF, under the strict supervision of Dr Abdulwahab, the project desires to uplift healthcare delivery nationwide in volume and value. One elevating commentary on the PHC challenge was made by Dr Ziqirullah Giwa, a former Health Advisor at the NGF, that the motivation for driving the project to success clinically should not be money, but recognition. As a symbolic mark of recognition therefore we are profiling all the states' commissioners of health, beginning from this issue.



'PHC: The backing of the NGF is invaluable'

Health is a vital sector and is one of the sectors which impacts on everyone. We need more funding but more importantly we need to be more efficient with what is available. For too long we have grappled with insufficient progress in improving our dismal health indices – Dr Amina Mohammed.

Please unveil for us the real Dr Amina...

I am a public health practitioner who has had the opportunity of working in the public health space for the past 17 and a half years and learning a lot in the process. I briefly worked as a Lecturer at the ABU Medical College and then proceeded to work with the United Nations Children's Fund for about 15 years before assuming office as the Commissioner of Health in Kaduna State. I also hold a master's degree in public health from the University of Liverpool. I have both clinical and public health experience spanning over 25 years working at ABUTH, and extensive field experience working in Maternal and Child Health, Immunization, Health System policy and programming.

Ensuring healthy lives and promoting wellbeing is one of the Sustainable Development Goals. What are the health priorities in your state for achieving SDG3?

The ultimate measure of any national development is healthy citizens; this in turn impacts on human capital development, productivity, and prosperity. Our mandate is to ensure that the citizens of Kaduna State enjoy the best possible state of health and wellbeing in line with the SDGs and we have been working to ensure that policies and service delivery are doing just that!

Our state priorities for the health sector include:

- a. Implementing appropriate strategies and interventions which offer the lowest cost and highest impact to promote good quality services for all citizens.
- b. Effective and efficient Primary Health Care service delivery (that is community centred) for all but targeting the most vulnerable groups of the society, pregnant women and children under five years
- c. Free healthcare for pregnant women and children under 5 (40% of population)
- d. Free malaria treatment and prevention for all, and free Services in other areas: clinical consultation, counselling and testing for HIV, antiretroviral therapy and ambulance services; and
- e. Subsidy for other health services which include cost of drugs, haemodialysis, laboratory, and catering services in hospitals.
- f. Strong public-private sector collaboration in preventive, rehabilitative and curative PHC and secondary care all; some of these initiatives such as the use of drones to deliver lifesaving commodities in far to reach and hard to reach communities in partnership with Zipline are ground-breaking as we are the first state to do this in Nigeria.
- g. An effective linkage between the three levels of health in the State through a robust referral system, emphasizing on speciality of care at the secondary and tertiary level.
- h. Improved skilled manpower and infrastructural capacity at all levels of care.

- i. Promote community participation in health care delivery
- j. To promote the culture of research to guide the Health Sector Policies and decision making.

The NGF Secretariat is championing PHC strengthening through the PHC Challenge Fund; what is your state doing on the program?

There are several things we are focusing on in different areas;

A. LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE:

- i. RI Task Force is now PHC Task Force (fully integrated) with regular meetings chaired by the Deputy Governor.
- ii. LG Health Advisory Committees (chaired by LGA Chairmen) now fully functional and having relatively more regular meetings
- iii. Streamlined TWGs for more effective technical to planning and implementation of all PHC interventions

B. SERVICE DELIVERY

- i. Integrated Service Delivery Plan where services are now delivered in tandem, rather than horizontally
- ii. Integrated Demand creation strategy – all community structures merged into one. All messages now delivered by the same people per visit, community mobilisation is conducted in a more integrated manner with regards to general health promotion, prevention, and immunisation.
- iii. MNCH Week conducted every 6 months
- iv. We have reintroduced Under 5 clinics established in pilot facilities which we hope to scale up to all PHCs

HER PROFILE

DR. AMINA MOHAMMED BALONI, (MBBS, FWACP, MPH)

Dr. Amina Mohammed Baloni was born in Kaduna to Aisha and Aliko Mohammed, She graduated MBBS in 1991 from Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, obtained her fellowship from the West African College of Physicians in Internal Medicine 2004, and holds a Master's in Public Health from University of Liverpool. With over 25 years of practice first as a clinician and then as a public health professional, her core competencies in communication, drive for results and working with people developed during her years working in development helped her to achieve results working with government across various states to improve health and wellbeing of children and women through capacity building and transferring technical skills such as planning, analytics, formulating strategies and monitoring for results have become her special endowment.

Dr. Amina Mohammed Baloni as a Consultant physician served as a lecturer at Ahmadu Bello University Teaching hospital Zaria, responsible for all aspects of clinical management and provided clinical and academic guidance to medical students undergoing undergraduate training and doctors in residency training, preparation for exams and clinical management of cases. She also conducted examinations for undergraduate medical students according to the Medical and Dental Council criteria

Dr. Mohammed Baloni worked in the development field with UNICEF Kaduna Field Office (2004-2019) as a Health Specialist responsible for providing technical assistance to Government and other counterparts on Health programmes including Maternal and Child Health interventions as well as Health

- v. Group ANC services now showing better retention for women across the ANC/Labour/PNC continuum. Currently implemented in 494 health facilities. Plan is to scale up to all PHC facilities
- vi. Neonatal corners soon to be introduced in Kaduna State PHCs for early neonatal interventions (trainings conducted, equipment provided).

c. HRH

- i. 1,225 additional staff recruited for the PHCs. 1,834 to be recruited.
- ii. PHC Management Support Project to build the capacity of PHC Officers-in-charge on management of the facilities. Aim is to transform the OICs from technically inclined health workers to Managers of semi-autonomous business entities.

D. MEDICINES AND EQUIPMENT

- i. Supply chain transformation project implemented to achieve One Supply Chain System
- ii. MOU with manufacturers reached. Drugs (of good quality and cost) being consistently supplied
- iii. Equipment worth 3.5Billion Naira procured for all 255 Ward

E. FINANCING

- i. 15% allocation to Health (Abuja declaration) achieved for the last 4 years.
- ii. Health Insurance Authority fully functional – all public sector employees have been enrolled and we are now targeting the informal sector, over 500,000 citizens are so far part of the scheme.
- iii. BHCPF is being implemented to provide services for children under 5 and pregnant women.
- iv. State equity contribution: 1% State CRF being disbursed to Kaduna State Health Insurance Scheme to cover the most vulnerable population.
- f. Monitoring & Evaluation has been strengthened through the establishment of an.
- i. Integrated Data Control Room, which is working very well - improving reporting rates and minimising errors.
- ii. We have put in place Local Technical Assistants which is a mentoring program for LGA and facility level staff for data capture and reporting as well as facilitation of data demand use, this is supported and driven by Ward Development Committees.

What are the major challenges in providing solutions for PHC in your state?

- a. Constrained fiscal space due to the nationwide economic constraints
- b. The COVID 19 Pandemic disrupted services especially during the lock down and this has led to a fall in service coverage
- c. HRH: The state has over 1000 PHCs and as such we have a challenge with getting enough human resources to cover all facilities as is required, Primary Healthcare subsector is operating with 33% of the required capacity, this has impacted on the quality of service, but we are evolving strategies such as the task shifting, task sharing policy and recruitment as well as redistribution of health workers to provide quality service to the people of Kaduna State
- d. Inadequate equipment in PHCs/GHs a hindrance to optimal service delivery, this is because of years of under investment, but we are working steadily to close this gap.
- e. Inadequate power supply in PHCs and GHs hinders the sector's ability



Dr Amina

- to operate 24-hour service, the government has begun the provision of solar electricity to all health facilities to ensure adequate power to facilities.
- f. Security challenges across the State have also contributed to non-operability of 24-hour service.

What are your expectations from the NGF team to facilitate the improvement of the PHC system in your state?

My expectation is that the PHC challenge will really galvanize states to focus on PHC services which is supposed to provide up to 70-80% of health care to the population. Already there is a consensus that if we are to reduce morbidity and mortality and improve our health indices then we must ensure the PHC system provides quality services that is responsive to community needs.

- a. Provide enough clarity of the Challenge, for example, we will need to clearly define what the parameters are for setting baselines, how can would the impact be measured and agree on how it will be done.
- b. Facilitate technical support to States by NGF as well partners e.g. UNICEF
- c. We will also need consistent funding support from our principals especially cash backing of budgeted funds.

Any closing remarks from you?

The current crop of Health Commissioner across the country are focused on breaking with the status quo. We are fortunate to have the strong backing of the NGF which is invaluable and together with the opportunity provided by the Presidential Health Reform Committee we'll reposition the sector to meet the challenges of providing a health service that is responsive to the need of all Nigerians.

policy at field office level covering the North Western part of the country across 8 states and FCT supporting partners to improve capacity, coordination, monitoring and evaluation to help deliver quality health services and advocate for the rights of children and women.

Amina is a team player. Leading by building consensus among her team. She is also passionate about developing people and is a good listener. A systems person, she believes that strong systems provide sustainable development and results. She has strong leadership skills refined through her training and honed at the prestigious INSEAD Business School. Her various certifications in Health System Strengthening, Health Financing and World Bank Institute have positioned her as a foremost professional with broad public health knowledge and experience to impact health systems and improve performance.

She is currently serving as the Honorable Commissioner for Health Kaduna State, a position she assumed in December 2019. She successfully coordinated the public health response to the COVID 19 pandemic which saw Kaduna State as one of the top states in managing the pandemic, through a robust response that aimed to streamline the response within the existing health structures and harnessing all available resources. Under her watch, Kaduna was the first state in the country to launch delivery of medical supplies using innovative technology of unmanned aerial drones to hard to reach and far to reach communities in the State.

An individual who believes that as a person who has been fortunate to receive good education, she has a duty to give back to society and uplift others which she does vigorously. Amina is married and is blessed with three wonderful children.

She once said that "No one should get sick and die because they are poor"

NGF Should Continue to Drive Competitive PHC Engagement with States – *Filani*

The Hon. Commissioner for Health and Human Services of Ekiti State, Oyebanji Filani shares some insights into the Primary Health Care (PHC) program at the subnational level and holds that the NGF should continue to drive Competitive PHC engagements with States.

Who really is Oyebanji Filani?

My name is Oyebanji Filani. I am the Commissioner for Health and Human Services in Ekiti State Nigeria. As Commissioner, I lead the development of policies and I provide strategic oversight on the implementation of innovative and sustainable programmes, toward fulfilling Universal Health Coverage in Ekiti State. I oversee the entirety of the State's health sector which includes the State Ministry of Health and all its agencies. I am also the Chairperson of the Nigeria Commissioners for Health Forum, which is an incorporated body of sub-national health leaders in Nigeria.

Prior to becoming a Public Servant, I was the Technical Director for Nigeria's Basic Health Care Provision Fund (BHCPF), a Federal Government of Nigeria initiative aimed at addressing how primary health care is financed and delivered. I was also the Senior Technical Advisor to the former Minister of Health, Professor Isaac F. Adewole. In these roles, I provided leadership for the implementation of national initiatives. I led engagements with political and health leaders across the 36 states, as well as international and local partners. I also have experience working in the United Kingdom's National Health Service. I am an alumnus of the College of Medicine, University of Lagos State and I also hold a degree in Health Economics and Health Policy from the University of Birmingham.

We understand that ensuring healthy lives and promoting wellbeing is one of the Sustainable Development Goals. Could you share the health priorities in your state in line with achieving SDG3?

As a government, our health priorities can be categorised into the following key parameters and they are:

PHC Revitalisation:

Human Resource is key to ensuring that when people get to a health facility, there's an adequate number of skilled health providers to attend to their needs. To create equitable access to skilled healthcare services, especially in PHCs. We reshuffled nurses and midwives to ensure that underserved interior communities had skilled personnel. We also established the National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) medical fellowship, in which Corper Doctors were actively encouraged to work in rural settings within State. During the pilot of this fellowship, there was 99% retention of the Doctors posted to rural areas. Despite the paucity of funds, we recruited additional doctors into the State's health system and retrained over 500 nurses to enable them to provide quality services.

Infrastructure:

Without the right infrastructure, health workers cannot provide quality services and people will not be encouraged to utilise health services. Recognising this, we invested heavily in the renovation of 14 out

The NGF Health Team:

Gbenga Sadik, Policy Analyst (Nutrition), Marvellous Olatunji, Research Analyst, Dr. Chinekwa Oreh, Senior Health Specialist, Dr. Ahmad Abdulwahab, Senior Health Advisor, Maryam Ahmad, Public Health Consultant and Dr. Avuwa Joseph Oteri, Immunization Advisor



of 22 General Hospitals and 100 out of 177 Primary Healthcare Centres (PHCs) which were also provided with new equipment. The secondary healthcare facilities were equipped with modern facilities that most lacked, enabling them to actually provide advanced medical services to complement the PHCs as proper referral centres.

Commodities: In 2021, we established the Ekiti State Drugs and Medical Commodities Management Agency (DMA). This agency has signed an MOU with leading Nigerian pharmaceuticals to ensure constant availability and price stability of quality drugs and medical supplies. This will ensure that whenever a person seeks medical care, there will always be quality drugs and consumables in the health facilities, at an affordable price.

Demand Creation and Use

To create demand and reduce financial burden of health services especially for vulnerable populations, the State has purchased an explicit and guaranteed set of services for the population under its Health Insurance program. Currently, these services are available for pregnant women and under five children at designated PHCs and an additional 100,000 persons will be enrolled on the State Health Insurance Scheme.

The State health education/risk communications department also creates awareness on available services and facilities through mass media and direct community engagement.

Public Health Response:

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, we recognised the need to build and strengthen essential public health facilities and functions, that will not only respond to the pandemic, but position the State for timely and resilient outbreak preparedness and response. To this end, the State government increased the capital budget expenditure by 200% in 2021 to invest more in healthcare and epidemic preparedness/response. This enabled the investment of about 100-million-naira in establishing a molecular laboratory and a public health laboratory to improve testing and diagnosis. The State surveillance systems were also strengthened, 17 Emergency Operations Centres (EOCs) were established across the State (1 per LGA) to enable quick detection and response to health events and 145 COVID-19 sample collection sites were set-up across all LGAs. We are also currently working with a good number of partners to ensure that every eligible person in Ekiti State gets vaccinated.

The State has also consistently been recognised as the best performing State in disease surveillance.

Quality of Care:

To improve the quality of care, we are creating an enabling legal environment to enforce standards and adequate monitoring of healthcare services and providers. This will ensure that the public is protected from fake, non-credentialed, or minimally certified health providers and from healthcare facilities that do not adhere to the standards of care.

We also launched the Ekiti State Ambulance Service (EKSAMS) that will enable the prevention of avoidable deaths and disabilities from medical emergencies in Ekiti State through the provision of high-quality and timely emergency medical service and transport.

The NGF Secretariat is championing PHC strengthening through the PHC Challenge Fund. Could you share some of the things your state is doing around strengthening PHC?

In line with the Federal Ministry of Health's policy of 1 PHC per ward, we have established at least one Primary Healthcare Centre in all the 177 Wards in Ekiti State. These Primary Healthcare Centres like I mentioned earlier, were renovated and furnished with new equipment, key of which are 189 solar direct drive refrigerators distributed to all the PHCs to ensure optimum vaccine cold chain. Key secondary facilities were also renovated to serve as referral facilities. Nurses were also reshuffled within Senatorial zones to ensure equitable distribution of staff and over

500 PHC personnel were re-trained to provide better services. With the establishment of the State Drugs and Medical Supplies agency, and the MOU with leading pharmaceuticals, we have largely addressed the issue of drug stock outs and price instability in PHCs.

On the demand side, we disbursed 62,495,245 naira to 122 PHCs under the Basic Health Care Provision Fund (BHCPF). This fund allowed the renovation of PHCs and the provision/purchase of an explicit package of free health services for pregnant women, under-five children and other vulnerable groups which has created increased demand for health services at the community level. Over 5,000 persons are currently benefiting from the State Health Insurance Scheme and at least 120,000 persons will benefit in the coming phase of the programme.

Can you share some of the major challenges you face in providing solutions toward PHC strengthening in your state?

Prior to 2020, most PHCs in the State faced operational challenges that contributed to poor quality of care and this affected the demand for services in PHCs. Also, decayed infrastructure, inadequate human resources, stock out of essential drugs and commodities, and poor adherence to infection prevention precautions were also major challenges.

However, with increased investment in healthcare, we have been able to improve these conditions through the interventions mentioned above.

With regards to the PHC- Leadership challenge, could you share some of your expectations from the NGF team to facilitate the improvement of the PHC system in your state?

I consider the NGF a central coordinating unit that helps States achieve their stated goals. So far, they have played that role excellently and we are proud of the work that they do. With reference to PHC improvement in States, we believe the NGF will continue to support States engagements with partners and also continue to use its health scorecard to drive competitive engagement among States.

Kindly share any closing thoughts you have with us.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, health care leaders and policy makers in general must recognise the need to invest and build a resilient and sustainable health system. This requires deliberate investments in people, systems and processes that work. In Ekiti, we are committed to this. Our goal as a government, is to leave behind for the incoming administration, a system that works.

Filani



DR. OYEBANJI FILANI

A Prolific Physician, Health Economist

Dr. Oyebanji Filani is a trained Physician and Health Economist with working experience in the United Kingdom and Nigeria.

He has 17 years of experience in the design and implementation of health financing and health reforms.

In 2020, he was appointed Commissioner for Health and Human Services in Ekiti State.

In his less than two years in this role, the State has recorded an increase of over 300% in development partner investments in its health sector, with these investments spanning health financing, infrastructure, service delivery and innovation. In addition, under his leadership, Ekiti State was recognized as the best performing state in the country for disease surveillance and response.

Oyebanji has employed a systems-thinking approach in addressing health service delivery in Ekiti State. For instance, he established in partnership with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Governance Lab (MIT/GOVLAB) and Co-creation hub, Nigeria's first Governance Innovation Accelerator Challenge. Using human-centered design and social science, the initiative has developed two solutions to address statewide health challenges in quality-of-care delivery and public health security.

In 2019-2020, he served as the Technical Director of the Basic Health Care Provision Fund (BHCPF), a Federal Government of Nigeria initiative with a dedicated funding of \$150m, equivalent to 1% of Nigeria's annual revenue. In his capacity as technical director, he provided thought leadership on the program, drove its implementation and ensured

performance indicators were met in the 36 States of Nigeria.

Between 2016 and 2019, Oyebanji served as the Senior Technical Adviser to the immediate past Federal Minister of Health in Nigeria. In this role he led the data and analytical work that enabled the mobilization of an annual \$180m domestic and development partner resources under the BHCPF, and the provision of \$2.7bn for the National Strategy for Routine Immunization and Primary Healthcare Systems under the GAVI partnership. He also provided thought leadership and coordination across several work streams for the office of the Minister.

Over a three-year period, Oyebanji served as a member of the Technical Committee of the World Bank/USAID led Annual Universal Health Coverage (UHC) Forum, helping to provide strategic guidance and development of discussion materials. He also served



\$180m

annual domestic and development partner resources under the BHCPF, and the provision of \$2.7bn for the National Strategy for Routine Immunization and Primary Healthcare Systems under the GAVI partnership, the role he led!



Filani

on the Advisory Committee for the Strategic Purchasing Africa Resource Center (SPARC), a Bill and Melinda Gates Funded program, focused on strengthening strategic purchase expertise in sub-Saharan Africa. Oyebanji also served on an Advisory Board to develop a global Health Equity Program of Action (an implementation framework to support country effort in reducing health inequities) led by the O'Neill Institute at Georgetown University USA. He currently serves as Technical Expert Advisory Committee of the Fair Process for Financing UHC, a joint initiative of the Norwegian Institute of Public Health and the World Bank.

In 2014, he co-designed a Federal level Flagship Social Protection Program and co-developed the concept document and cost model for the program, working with a multi-sectoral team with representations from 11 Ministries, Departments and Agencies.

He has extensive practical experience with the application of economic analysis in shaping policy and programming. Whilst in the UK, he led the analysis of knock-on costs for non-cancer screening programs initiated by the UK's National Health Service (NHS), with a view to strengthening health service delivery.

Between 2009 and 2010, he worked as a medical service and quality assurance officer at Expatcare Health International, a Health Maintenance Organization. In this role, he led the coordination, implementation, monitoring of managed care operations, medical services delivery and quality assurance mechanisms for the organization.

Oyebanji currently serves as the Chairperson of the Nigeria Health Commissioners Forum, where he guides his colleagues on critical health systems reform issues at the sub-national level.

His interests are in data and analytics for Health Financing and use of evidence to inform decision-making.

DR ZIQRULLAH GIWA is the man that guided the NGF to its triumph in the Polio Eradication project which got Nigeria off the global polio map. It was according to him a long and bumpy ride that however, ended well. The ES spoke to him on that memorable odyssey and sought his take on the way forward with the new Primary Healthcare Challenge project.

What is the Structure of Polio Eradication Activities of the NGF?

There were different partners that came on board for a high-level engagement with the Governors. This engagement was held with the

Minister of Health and then, there was also a follow-up engagement with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, (BMGF).

From that engagement, they came up with a communique where the Governors all agreed to eradicate polio. That communique became the foundation for the challenge.

At that point, there hadn't been any incentive-based leadership challenge. Polio was the first. The Nigerian Governors Immunization Leadership Challenge was the first incentive-based leadership challenge from a programmatic perspective.

There were incentives for leadership, where the media gave the best Governor of the Year awards. But in the development space, this was the first of its kind. This basically meant that we were building everything from scratch. There were no previous lessons to be lifted off of. This was a new thing.

There were key actors who were saddled with responsibilities in the implementation. The World Health Organisation (WHO) was saddled with the responsibility for data. The National Primary Healthcare Development Agency (NPHCDA) was saddled with the responsibility for supporting engagements across the states as well as working with other partners while the NGF had the key role of maintaining the secretariat while also handling the advocacy component.

We also had other stakeholders such as Rotary and UNICEF, but they didn't play a major role as did the organisations I had mentioned.

For the secretariat, what we ensured we did was to obtain the data from WHO. That data was going to be cross-referenced with the primary health care to ensure that there were no discrepancies.

Then, the secretariat would also reach out to the states for some data that was not provided but that was required for the challenge.

In the design of the challenge, we had criteria for recording Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

There were about twelve (12) indicators that were a mixture of both process and output indicators.

The very key indicators were targeted at the governors themselves. The indicators were to measure the Governors' commitments, who were challenged to upscale the commitment and oversight of the Governors on Polio as a primary goal of the challenge.

There were three indicators for the Governors which required them on a quarterly basis to achieve the indicators. One of the indicators was to have a visible and public engagement on polio. Another was for them to convene meetings of stakeholders quarterly, to meet with traditional and religious leaders and then the third indicator was to convey a meeting with stakeholders with individuals such as their local government chairman.

These were the three engagements that they needed to achieve. For me, that should form the bedrock of any future challenge that we have.

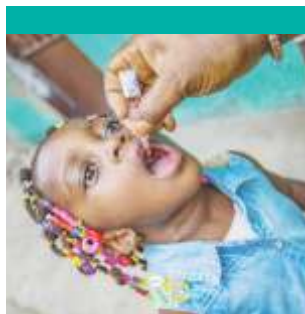
Again, at the subnational level, we all know that the Governors are critical in driving engagements and developments. The secretariat was responsible for conveying the data.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) was focused on programmatic data. This is data around vaccines and coverage.

How Do You Think the NGF can Advance Its Level of Performance to Cover a larger Spectrum of Healthcare?

For polio, people had different perspectives. Some felt that polio shouldn't be isolated alone because the challenges that were being experienced around polio were largely due to the poor performance of the PHC.

Now, having a PHC challenge makes it worthwhile but because polio was a global challenge, it became a top priority. A lot of investments had been made. Nigeria has been trying to eradicate polio for over thirty years until the



30

Years ago Nigeria has been trying to eradicate polio, not until the NGF took it up.



Political Capital, Not money will drive PHC to success



Giwa

NGF took it up.

Now, it's about having to focus where necessary and narrow down for outcomes. Also, there were some investments and concerns around polio and how the investment could have been diversified into PHC.

It is said the reason we had polio is because of the failure of the PHC. Why are we not fixing it?

Having the polio challenge gave NGF experience in addressing issues, particularly around leadership. Now, I need to say that polio is just one of several vaccine-preventable diseases.

In PHC, we've got several components in terms of service components for PHC. We've got nutrition, antenatal, and immunisation under which polio falls. There are nine to ten vaccines on the schedule. We've got maternal health and several other components as well as the human resource component. PHC is quite elaborate. It makes you realise that what was done on polio is just a tip of the iceberg.

Where do you think the Health Commissioners and doctors at the State Level should

Start tackling the Primary Healthcare Challenge in the six geopolitical zones?

Yes, doctors play a critical role but then, at the PHC level, particularly in the northern part of the country, we do not have doctors driving the PHC. In the southern part, we do have Doctors, but a lot of things are changing now with the PHC under one roof program.

Now, I see that heads of departments are Doctors but, in the past, in the north, you'd have someone with an environmental certification heading the department. Now, I see that states have Medical Doctors as heads of departments.

Now, PHC is a constitutional mandate of the local government and the states. With the PHC Under One Roof, we have been able to merge where both the human and service component have been put in the state and primary care development agency.

We now have the state primary care development agencies. When we were driving the polio campaign a few years back, we didn't have that sort of structure. We have had to deal with local governments on one side and then the State Ministry of Health on the other. For this primary healthcare challenge, there must be a strong engagement at the state primary healthcare development agencies because they have that mandate at the state level, and the subnational level to drive the PHC.

However, you don't want to isolate the States' Health Commissioners because the commissioners have that leadership role and oversight on health as a whole and primary healthcare is only one component.

There are three tiers of health which are tertiary, secondary and primary healthcare. However, we all know that Primary HealthCare is the closest to the people. For us to be able to drive this properly, there must be a sustained engagement with the commissioners as they are the ones that routinely engage with the Governors.

The state primary healthcare agencies that are supervised by the Commissioners are also critical and need to be engaged as well. These are the key actors other than the Governors.

One of the things that helped with the polio challenge was when all the Governors agreed that the Deputy Governors were to Chair the project at the state level.

Today, most of the Executive Secretaries of the Primary Healthcare agencies are medical doctors and the heads of local departments are also medical doctors. This is a major milestone. So, the engagement on polio and prioritising health has given PHC that subtle transition and engagement to have critical people in the position.

There is also the need to do a lot of engagements with partners at the state level because there are partners that are working on PHCs that are funded by some donors. It is also necessary to embark on a state-by-state mapping to know who the partners are and what role they are playing and how to effectively utilize them.

This matters because they are more likely to tell you the true situation of things as opposed to state appointees. The appointees are likely not going to want to say things that will show their Governors in a bad light. They would tell you things that they want governors to hear. However, when you reach out to the partners, then you'd get other vital and accurate information.

Are there any likely encumbrances the teams on the PHC challenge should expect?

I believe the PHC should have its own performance indicators. It is not enough to get data only. The Secretariat must go the extra mile. They must go to the PHCs and interface with people, and the workers and understand some of their challenges.

This matters because you would see some data that could have been cooked up to make a state look good. However, the reality is that the data is not a true reflection of the situation on the ground.

When you go the extra mile and you engage, then you are likely to hear some of the real challenges. Then you can corroborate with the report you have and what you have heard from the field. This helps the engagement to be able to make informed decisions. You have to be adequately informed to engage stakeholders effectively.

If you sit back in the office and wait for the information to be provided, you are likely to be misled. This is critical and the team that takes on the PHC Challenge must be aware of this.

At the State Level, with its notoriety for appointment on filial considerations, how do you think we can overcome that bottleneck? Can we obtain data anonymously?

One thing that I did was that I made them see NGF as a reference point. Everyone was comfortable coming to the NGF with their problems. That breaks barriers.

I know scenarios when government partners would call me and say they need help to get to the Governor. For the new team, it depends on how they position themselves. I positioned the secretariat very strongly.

For example, I had a situation in Sokoto State where the commissioner and the SA in Primary Health Care had

challenges. Somehow, the SA seemed stronger than the commissioner.

In such circumstances, you needed to strike a balance and not be seen to be in favour of the SA over the commissioner or vice versa. One needs to be careful handling such situations because the information always filter out, and you'd have to stay away from local politics. You must maintain your role and state why you are there.

How can we table this and get the immediate buy-in of Governors and their endorsement?

For polio eradication, we had a high-level engagement that was driven by the Minister and Bill Gates. Now, I don't know what their motivation would be for them to come together. In terms of the incentive, the financial incentive is not enough motivation for the Governors.

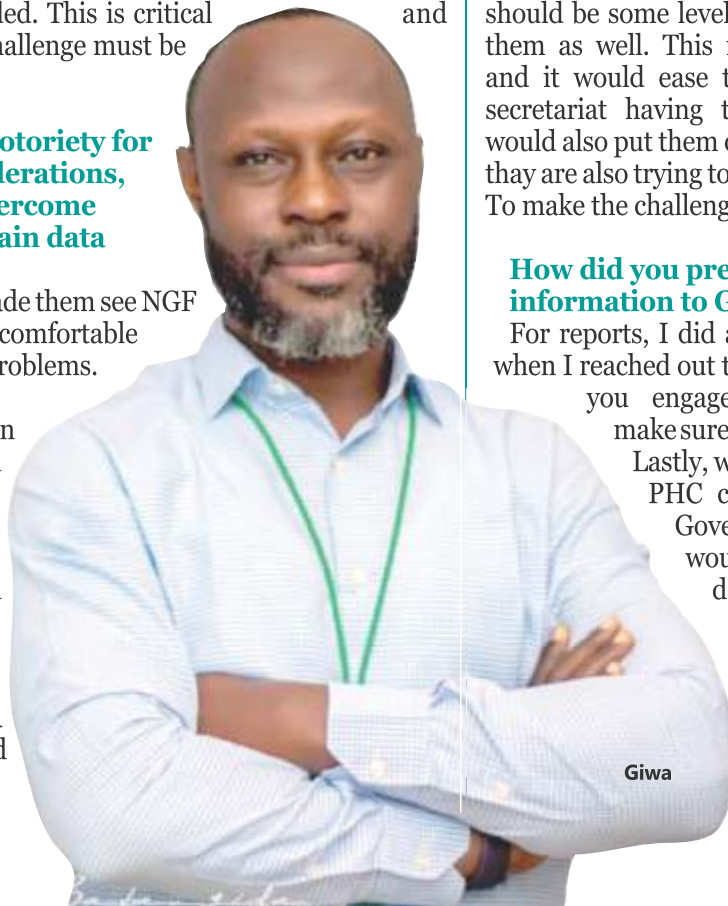
If you want to really drive this PHC to a huge success, the political capital should be the overwhelming incentive and not money.

If there is someone at the global level that comes to drive this, it makes a difference. Having a global recognition would be critical.

Also, the focus in the past was on the Governors but now, there should also be incentives for the Commissioners and the Executive Secretariates. There should be some level of recognition for them as well. This is very important, and it would ease the trouble of the secretariat having to drive them. It would also put them on that scale where they are also trying to make a difference. To make the challenge a priority.

How did you present vital information to Governors?

For reports, I did a photo newsletter when I reached out to the states. When you engage the Governors, make sure you have evidence. Lastly, when discussing the PHC challenge with the Governors, other issues would have to step down. You don't want to over-burden them with too many requests.



Giwa



**DR PABARA NEWTON
IGWELE**

"A PERSON OF INTEREST"

Dr. Pabara Newton Igwele has seen interesting times during his professional sojourn as a doctor. On top of that, he is a music enthusiast. Essentially, Dr. Pabara is a firm believer in humanity, most of all, this country Nigeria and its programs.

The expert in Public Health says that his area of special interest is Occupational Health. He was also a volunteer with the World Health Organisation, WHO.

These qualities make him a person of interest in the new Primary Healthcare challenge that is being midwived by the United Nation's International Children's Education Fund (UNICEF) and the Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF). At the time he was a Public Health Resident.

In his ten years since leaving the University of Port Harcourt, where he graduated in 2013, Dr. Pabara has deepened his desire to fight public health discrepancies, with sweat and blood, by being involved with drones' construction for vaccines and other health services delivery.

This chequered history of devoted achievements

has culminated in the upgrade of the Bayelsa State School of Nursing to a college, including a School of Midwifery, the Bayelsa State Health Insurance Office Complex and ultimately hosting the Bayelsa Health Summit.

These are not lean career achievements. Ploughing those into a National Primary Healthcare initiative of this collaborative nature would add immense value to this campaign to bring healthcare services to the doorsteps of the common man in Nigeria.

He is the commissioner for Health in Bayelsa State. He enjoys reading and watching football.

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WHO DIRECTOR-GENERAL'S

Opening remark at the UN COVID-19 Media briefing

Good morning, good afternoon and good evening,
I am concerned that cases of COVID-19 continue to rise - putting further pressure on stretched health systems and health workers. I am also concerned about the increasing trend of deaths.

The Emergency Committee on COVID-19 met on Friday last week and concluded that the virus remains a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.

The Committee noted their concern about several interlinked challenges.

First, sub-variants of Omicron, like BA.4 and BA.5, continue to drive waves of cases, hospitalisation and death around the world.

Second, surveillance has reduced significantly – including testing and sequencing – making it increasingly difficult to assess the impact of variants on transmission, disease characteristics, and the effectiveness of counter-measures.

Third, diagnostics, treatments and



Varmus



vaccines are not being deployed effectively.

The virus is running freely and countries are not effectively managing the disease burden based on their capacity, in terms of both hospitalisation for acute cases and the expanding number of people with post covid-19 condition - often referred to as long-covid.

Finally, there is a major disconnect in COVID-19 risk perception between scientific communities, political leaders and the general public.

This is a dual challenge of communicating risk and building community trust in health tools and public health social measures like masking, distancing and ventilation.

The Committee made a series of recommendations with several that I want to focus on.

New waves of the virus demonstrate again that the COVID-19 is nowhere near over.

As the virus pushes at us, we must push back.

This is a dual challenge of communicating risk and building community trust in health tools and public health social measures like masking, distancing and ventilation

We're in a much better position than at the beginning of the pandemic.

Of course, there's been a lot of progress.

We have safe and effective tools that prevent infections, hospitalizations and deaths.

However, we should not take them for granted.

As G-20 finance ministers meet next week, it is critical that governments around the world finance WHO and the ACT-Accelerator to ensure the equitable distribution of health tools.

As transmission and hospitalisations rise, governments must also deploy tried and tested measures like masking, improved ventilation and test and treat protocols.

I urge governments to regularly review and adjust their COVID-19 response plans based on the current epidemiology and also the potential for new variants to appear.

Governments should also work to reverse the reduction in

surveillance, testing and sequencing, and share anti-virals effectively.

Vaccines have saved millions of lives and it's important for governments to focus on boosting those most at-risk communities, finding the unvaccinated so

as to build up the wall of immunity toward the 70 percent vaccination target.

Planning and tackling COVID-19 should also go hand-in-hand with vaccinating for killer diseases like measles, pneumonia and diarrhea.

It's not a question of either/or, it's possible to do both.

And new vaccines, including HPV and malaria, should continue to be introduced.

Today, WHO released the first-ever report on vaccines in development to prevent infections caused by antimicrobial resistant bacterial pathogens.

The report examines some of the challenges facing vaccine development and proposes disruptive approaches to nurture innovation in a space that has been severely neglected.

I am glad to be joined today by WHO's Science Council, which I set up just over a year ago to provide advice on advances in science and technology that impact global health.

Led by Dr. Harold Varmus, the group just had their first in-person meeting and has been focused on genomics given its implications for public health and the challenges of scaling it up in low- and middle-income countries.

During COVID-19, genomics has been

essential to detecting the virus initially and new variants subsequently, and also integral to the development of tests, treatments and vaccines.

As laid out in WHO's new ten-year global genomic surveillance strategy, genomic surveillance covers disease detection, strengthening lab systems, developing tests, data sharing and analysis so that together new health tools can be developed and deployed.

Further, genomics has massive potential beyond pathogen surveillance, for human health.

It is timely for countries to invest in infrastructure and human resources in this area

To tell us more about the work of the Science Council, I'm happy to hand over to Dr. Harold Varmus.

DR. VARMUS, YOU HAVE THE FLOOR.

Dr. Harold Varmus speaks

Thank you Dr. Varmus for that deep dive into the work of the Science Council and genomics.

I couldn't agree more about the importance of scaling up genomic sequencing capacity globally and also ensuring that enough bio-analysts



Varmus

are trained to act on the sequencing.

ON MONKEYPOX, THERE ARE NOW 9,200 CASES IN 63 COUNTRIES.

The Emergency Committee for monkeypox will reconvene next week and look at trends, how effective the counter-measures are and make recommendations for what countries and communities should do to tackle the outbreak.

In the meantime, the multi-pronged approach continues:

First, WHO is working closely with civil society and LGBTIQ+ community, especially to tackle the stigma around the virus and spread information so people can stay safe.

Second, WHO continues to work with countries and vaccine manufacturers to coordinate the sharing of vaccines, which are currently scarce.

Third, WHO continues to work with countries and experts to drive forward research and development.

On Sunday and Monday, the National Institute for Biomedical Research in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the National Institute of Health and Medical Research and the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases in collaboration with WHO, convened researchers and experts in trials worldwide to develop consensus on a global CORE protocol for the evaluation of treatments for monkeypox.

I again stress that we must work to stop onward transmission and advise governments to implement contact tracing to help track and stem the virus as well as to assist people in isolation.

IN GHANA THERE ARE CURRENTLY TWO SUSPECTED CASES OF MARBURG.



NEWS

Ghana is currently dispatching samples to the Institute Pasteur of Dakar in Senegal for verification.

In the meantime, the Ministry of Health has set up precautionary contact tracing, case investigations and preparedness in health facilities with the support of WHO.

FINALLY ON SYRIA: The renewal of the United Nations Security Council resolution on cross-border operations in northwest Syria is very good news for the nearly 4 and a-half million Syrians whose lives and health depend on this humanitarian access.

WHO and partners will continue to deliver life-saving supplies and healthcare to this vulnerable population, 80% of whom are women and children.

We thank the Security Council for protecting and ensuring this vital operation serving civilians and avoiding an almost complete cut of vital aid.

Tarik, back to you.



KWARA GOV APPROVES RECRUITMENT OF 197 MEDICAL PERSONNEL, HEALTH WORKERS

Kwara State Governor AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq approved the recruitment of at least 197 different medical professionals to boost the Human Resources and efficient service delivery in the health sector.

The approval includes employment of eight consultants, 23 medical doctors, and 72 nurses with varying specialties, Director General of the Kwara State Hospital Management Board Mr. Sa'ad Aluko said in a statement recently.

The approval also covers three senior registrars, 13 pharmacy technicians, six pharmacists, four medical laboratory scientists, five scientific officers, 20 Community Health Extension Workers (CHEW), 20 Junior CHEW, and 23 hospital attendants, he added.

"We indeed commend the Governor for this timely approval as it will help to replace some of the hands that we have lost to attrition or retirement. This also complements the unprecedented infrastructural development we have seen in the health sector. We have several modern equipments recently procured by the state government," he said.

Hiring new hands to deploy these machines for the good of the masses completes a great effort of His Excellency to significantly turn around the fortune of this important sector in line with his campaign mantra. We are so grateful.

"The doctors include dentists to strengthen the new dental centre, while the eight consultants include two anaesthetists to man the new Intensive Care Unit even as government trains more perioperative/theatre nurses for the facility", he added.

Aluko said the process has since begun, adding however that most of the new officers and health workers would be taken from the large pool of Kwarans who had earlier applied and had been interviewed for the jobs last year.

Please elaborate on the evolution of the Health Sector of the NGF

If you want to talk about the health sector, it started with polio eradication where Governors were called upon to champion it which led to the vaccination efforts.

The participation of the NGF was the game changer that led to the certification of Nigeria being polio free. That was where we started. After polio, the NGF recognized the importance of strengthening its health team. Gradually from polio, we moved to supporting Primary Healthcare under one roof.

The NGF facilitated the establishment of structures in each of the states that align with primary health care under one roof concepts.

All 36 states included FCT have started Primary Health Care Board which is in line with the principle of primary health care under one roof.

The challenge is in the level of functionality from state to state. We have different pillars such as governance, human resource, financing, and legislation but fulfilling the pillars, varies from state to state.

Some states are struggling with offices. Some are struggling with having a minimum service package. Some are yet to move their staff from the ministry to the board.

We have succeeded to a certain degree in having PHC under one roof. We have moved to broader universal health coverage.

Various programs have been introduced by different organisations through the NGF, what has been the Governors' response in your estimation?

The programs are by NGF, and we are supported by our partners. One of the projects that we are working on now is the use of data for prioritisation, decision making and accountability.

This means trying to use evidence to obtain all information. What the NGF has been doing is presenting the state of the current affairs in each of the states, so the Governors are on top of it.

Then, of course, we also work on the nutrition scorecard. That is part of the work that we do to hold Governors accountable. To keep them informed.

In all the programs, we have different partners that support us. For example, we work with Bill and Melinda Gates, UNICEF, DataDent, Alive and Thrive, World Bank, FCDO which was former (DFID) and Foreign Affairs and Commonwealth office.

Of recent, we are exploring our other partners to deepen our work and the impact of our services on the populace.

What would your assessment of the meeting of commissioners for health be and what are your expectations going forward?



Dr. Ahmad

The participation of the NGF was the game changer in polio eradication – Dr. Ahmad

One of the successes I see that the secretariat has been able to achieve is the bringing of the commissioners together.

We now have a strengthened the Health Commissioners Forum that meets regularly and reviews progress and shares experiences on best practices. I believe that has been fantastic.

We now have increased cohesion and collaboration between states and amongst the forums. Increasingly, we have more experience being shared and I think things are getting better and better with the states.

That platform is important, and we will continue to support them. For the health team, we serve as the secretariat for them. They meet quarterly.

Please explain the PHC Challenge fund.

We are introducing a challenge fund that would have states compete. There would be an award given to the most improved and best performing in terms of primary health care.

We hope to launch it possibly next month. The award would be monetary, but the amount is not yet certain.

The best performing would be in each of the zones, that is the six geopolitical zones.

Explain the role of state primary health care operators that you have interfaced with and how would you have preferred they operated?

When it comes to Primary health care, we have a Primary Health Care Board. They are responsible for coordinating PHC activities across the states. And, so far, so good.

As far as operations are concerned, there is the component of the PHC under one roof that we want all of them to achieve. For instance, we demand that in all the states, all the PHC staff should be under one board. Not all states have been able to achieve that yet.

In addition, there is what we call the minimum service package. This would mean that states would be able to identify the minimum care. For example, if you have a primary health care facility, you will say that this is the staff and equipment needed to have in that facility.

When they have defined it, each state will have to do a gap analysis based on those criteria and standard they have set.

Define the standard, do a gap assessment, and then do what is called an investment plan in terms of how you are going to finish the plan over about a five-year period.

The second area is that of the health insurance that has been taken in 2/3 of states, the coverage could still be better. The coverage is still relatively low. However, compared to what the federal government has done, the states can do better.

NIGERIA
GOVERNORS'
FORUM



Congratulations

LAND OF HONOR



His Excellency,
Abiodun Ayobami Oyebanji
Ekiti State Governor-Elect

The Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF) wishes to congratulate the Ekiti State Governor-Elect, His Excellency, Abiodun Ayobami Oyebanji for your resounding victory at the just concluded election and the award of Certificate of Return by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

The NGF wishes you success as you prepare to take up responsibilities and the challenges that await you in this exalted office. The Forum assures Your Excellency of its full support as you embark on this new journey to taking your state to the next level.

We look forward to working with you and promise to provide the best possible services in line with global best practices and hope that you will in turn put your faith in the Forum where your immediate predecessor is currently serving as Chairman.

We wish you God's wisdom, strength, direction, and guidance to deliver on your mandate to your people. Your Excellency, welcome to the Nigeria Governors' Forum.

*The Nigeria Governors' Forum Special Library
...a library worth checking out!*



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