

...AN NGF MONTHLY PUBLICATION

NIGERIA GOVERNORS' FORUM



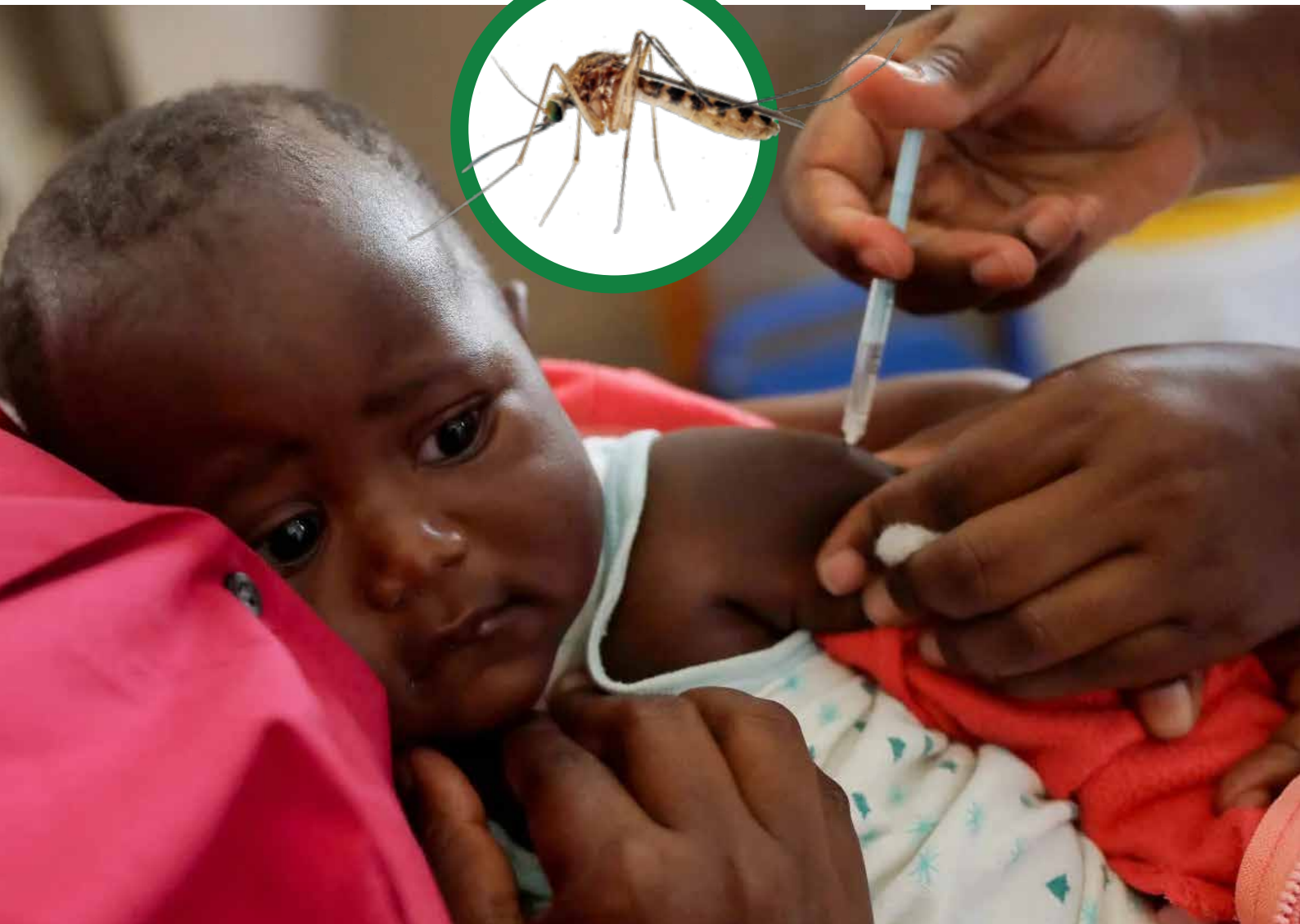
THE

EXECUTIVE

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Commentary

A killer more devastating than COVID-19

As killer diseases go, none has terrified and devastated the world in the last 100 years like COVID-19. According to WHO statistics, about 3 million people were killed in 133 countries as of 2020.

For reasons ranging from poor public health infrastructure to poor governance and material poverty, the prognosis for Africa was supposed to have been worse, with some forecasts expecting thousands of deaths within the first few months of the announcement of the pandemic.

The forecasters were forced to eat the humble pie. As it turned out not only did Africa experience only about 10 percent COVID-19 related fatalities, Europe and other regions bore the brunt.

But that was not the only lesson from COVID-19. Another significant lesson was that it confirmed what African public health practitioners had also known and said: that the number one public health concern on the continent was not COVID-19, but malaria!

According to WHO there were an estimated 249 million malaria cases globally in 2022, leading to 608,000 deaths in 85 countries. The organisation also said that 233 million people had reported malaria in Africa. Out of this figure, 580 deaths were reported, while Nigeria accounted for 26.8 percent of all malaria deaths worldwide.

That is why this year's World Malaria Day (WMD) in April was significant for the Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF). WHO has set a target 2030 – six years from now, actually – as the year for the "total elimination of malaria."

How prepared is Africa? How prepared is Nigeria?

Nigerian governors are putting their best foot forward and

doubling down on efforts to meet the WHO target. We see a shining example of this effort in Edo, where the Malaria Elimination Programme Manager, Dr. Williams Iyemekpolor has said the state is poised for to achieve "zero tolerance" within the target date.

But Edo is not alone. From Lagos to Sokoto and from Benue to Akwa Ibom and Plateau to Enugu states, the sub-nationals are working – side by side with partners – to ensure that the fundamental steps such as a) clean environment b) insecticide-treated nets c) accessible and affordable care, and d) ensure access to the malaria vaccine, when it is available.

And as you would expect, the Secretariat is not only waiting for 2030. In this edition, it is also taking you along the journey that we hope would lead the country to this long-overdue destination.

But there is more. The wives of state governors are front and centre in efforts to bring relief and succour citizens in their various states. With inflation at 33 percent and food inflation comprising the bulk of that figure, the wife of the Ogun State governor, Mrs. Bamidele Abiodun, is drumming support for women farmers. She spoke at a two-day agric-tech empowerment programme involving 150 women in Ijebu-Ode.

In Bayelsa, the First Lady, Dr. Gloria Diri, is rooting for President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's women's empowerment programme; while the wives of the Sokoto and Kebbi State governors are either distributing food items to women in their states, or sharing palliatives to wives of fallen soldiers.

Our Gender section is a must read, while proof that private-public sector initiative is thriving is illustrated by the comments of Africa's richest man, Alhaji Aliko Dangote, who was so impressed by what is happening in Gombe State during his recent visit, that he is already considering investing there.

For this and more, you'll love to read – and to keep this edition!

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STATES DOUBLE EFFORTS TO ROLL BACK MALARIA

Zero malaria by 2030. The target set by the World Health Organisation WHO for total elimination of malaria is a tall order, but it is not a pipe dream yet. Nations of the world, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa where malaria is most prevalent, are racing to breast the tape in record time. Control or near-elimination of malaria, if achieved, would be the most successful health revolution ever, for malaria remains the highest killer of mankind.

Reports gathered across the states testify to state governments and their agencies working in synergy with various malaria partners mostly in the right direction. At the 2024 World Malaria Day (WMD), April 25, health authorities in many states were in agreement that rolling back malaria by 2030 is a task that could be accomplished. Every state seemed to have put its best foot forward.

Edo appears to be one of the leading states. Having reduced malaria prevalence to 30% from 50% within two years, the state hopes to reduce the vicious disease to the barest minimum within the next six years. “We believe that between 2020 and 2030 we will, as a state, be able to achieve zero malaria,” said Dr. Williams Iyekekpolor, programme manager, Edo Malaria Elimination Programme.

PREPARATIONS FOR ‘WAR’

From Lagos to Sokoto, Benue to Akwa Ibom, and from Enugu to Plateau states, stakeholders were on hand to showcase the preparations they have made toward tackling

the malaria scourge.

Furthermore, non-state stakeholders including corporate bodies and non-governmental organisations have often come to the aid of state health ministries and agencies in the course of discharging their social responsibilities in the health sector.

A good example is Ibom Air which, through its chief operating officer, George Uriesi, donated 1,000 insecticidal nets and 3,000 doses of Sulfadoxine/Pyrimethamine to the Akwa Ibom State Ministry of Health during this year’s WMD.

In Plateau, 1.2million children in 17 endemic areas received anti-malaria prophylaxis during the rainy season in 2023, Dr. Mbas Mashor, state project manager, Malaria Consortium, said.

In Edo, there was a road walk as well as free malaria screening and treatment to mark the WMD.



6 We have distributed over 50,000 Artemisinin-based combination therapy tablets, 20,000 Sulfadoxine/Pyrimethamine, 73,000 rapid diagnostic test kits and 246,000 insecticide-treated nets.

- Ensure clean environment
- Sleep inside insecticide-treated nets always
- Seek treatment promptly
- Take the malaria vaccine when it's made available

In Abia, Dr. Patrick Adah, country director of the PanAfricare Consortium, said, "We have distributed over 50,000 Artemisinin-based combination therapy tablets, 20,000 Sulfadoxine/Pyrimethamine, 73,000 rapid diagnostic test kits and 246,000 insecticide-treated nets."

Governor Biodun Oyebo of Ekiti announced the commencement of free malaria treatment for expectant mothers and children under age 5. The governor said the government had also increased funding for, and renovated facilities in, secondary and tertiary health institutions.

The Lagos State Health District III and Epe LG distributed long-lasting insecticide-treated nets, insecticides

and malaria medications to Epe residents.

Even Kogi State's health ministry, in addition to a press conference and other activities, organised a road show to educate the public.

The Sokoto State Malaria Elimination Agency conducted medical outreaches in three LGAs during which there were free malaria testing and treatment, talks on family planning, nutrition and more.

A lot has therefore gone into the education and enlightenment of the Nigerian public on the various ways to prevent or treat malaria. The states' war strategies are similar:

CLEAN ENVIRONMENT

Especially in the rainy season when there is upsurge in cases of malaria, the drains (the breeding site for the vector mosquito) must be cleared. In the words of Prof Wellington Oyibo, a medical parasitologist, University of Lagos, we must strengthen vector control by interrupting the contact between mosquitoes and humans.

Senior citizens in their 90s who spoke with the magazine recounted life during the colonial era (1940s and '50s) when sanitary inspectors regularly cleared gutters and sprayed insecticides on them to kill the eggs, larvae, pupae and adults of anopheles mosquitoes. At the time, households were discouraged from preserving water in uncovered pots, and bushes and stagnant water were not allowed near residential areas. Malaria could be eliminated only after mosquitoes have been.

The need for "state ownership" in malaria interventions was highlighted by Prof Oyibo, also a director at the Centre for Transdisciplinary Research in Malaria and Neglected Tropical Diseases. "We were wondering why malaria is so high in Kebbi, Yobe and Sokoto. During the research, we discovered a journal of 1946 which showed that there was a Northern Nigeria Malaria Project. Where are those projects? Do we still have them running in those states?" he asked.

TREATED NETS

People should not only sleep inside insecticidal nets but ensure they do so consistently and correctly all year round, said Plateau commissioner for health Cletus Shurkuk.

Benue is a high performer in this respect. The state programme manager for malaria in the Ministry of Health and Human Services, Mrs. Susan Abege, said the government in collaboration with partners has given out 6 million nets to Benue residents. Perhaps this accounts for the reduction of the malaria prevalence rate in the state from 43% in 2015 to 18% in 2024.

For Lagos State, its health commissioner, Prof Akin Abayomi, on WMD, emphasised the need for insecticide-treated nets as well as indoor spraying. Such preventive measures would reduce malaria transmission, he said, warning that negligence could lead to serious complications.

EARLY TREATMENT

Many deaths from malaria are traceable to ignorance and poverty. On the 2024 WMD, medical experts reiterated the need for early and proper treatment of malaria. During its outreach in three LGAs, the Sokoto State Malaria

Elimination Agency tested people for the parasite as well as treated positive cases. Plateau health commissioner Shurkuk claimed that 206 primary healthcare centres (PHCs) and the general hospitals across the 17 LGAs of the state offered free malaria test and treatment.

States have been enjoined to have effective case management systems for treating positive malaria cases. Prof Oyibo of Lagos stated: "Treating all fevers as malaria is no longer acceptable... If someone with pneumonia and malaria gets to a health facility and the doctor treats that person for malaria alone, that person might die from pneumonia if left untreated because malaria medicine cannot work for pneumonia."

The Kogi health commissioner, Dr. Abdulaziz Adams Adeiza, spoke in the same vein, urging pregnant women to attend antenatal care so they would receive malaria-prevention drugs.

Although anti-malarial drugs have become more expensive (due to high inflation in the country) and risen beyond the reach of the poor, those under health insurance coverage have no reason to not see a doctor at the first sign of malaria. Ekiti State's "Ulerawa", for instance, has become accessible in 177 health facilities, fully covering children under age 5 as well as some people with disability. Governor Biodun Oyebo said the free malaria treatment for children, the elderly and expectant mothers would be accessible in all 177 PHCs under the "Ulerawa" scheme.

MALARIA VACCINE

Scepticism over vaccines persists in many cultures. Nevertheless, the Benue State coordinator of the WHO, Dr. Mohammed Abdulkarim, said the focus this year is on sensitisation of the people, because "very soon, we will have a malaria vaccine coming out". "Two highly effective vaccines have been made available across the world and Nigeria has been selected as one of the countries to pilot that malaria vaccination," Abdulkarim stated.

Enugu health commissioner, Prof Emmanuel Obi, urged developed countries and even African countries to assist in manufacturing a vaccine against malaria on the African continent. "It is not rocket science; if we put certain standard and policies together, it will become possible in our own lifetime," said the commissioner.

Whenever and wherever a WHO-certified malaria vaccine is seen, let Nigerians pay attention. That was the advice of Dr. Abimbola Osinowo, manager of the Lagos State Malaria Elimination Programme, to caregivers. She said: "The malaria vaccine is highly effective, having benefitted nearly a million children in Ghana, Malawi and Kenya. Caregivers



should ensure their children receive vaccination, especially between six months and two years, to prevent severe forms of malaria.”

CHANGING THE NARRATIVE

The theme for the 2024 WMD is apt: “Accelerating the fight against malaria for a more equitable world.” And the slogan is “Change the narrative: do the needful.”

Malaria remains a giant killer, as it was in and before 2007 when the WHO instituted the WMD. A highly prevalent parasitic infection in sub-Saharan Africa with high morbidity and mortality especially among children under age 5 and pregnant women, it deserves all the attention that is possible to get. On a global

scale, Nigeria ranks as one of the hardest hit: A 2022 WHO report showed that one in three global malaria-related deaths occur in Nigeria. The significant burden of malaria in the African region is further highlighted by Dr. Raji Muktar, the WHO representative in Kogi State: the region accounted for 94% of malaria deaths in 2022. Kogi commissioner Adeiza identified heavy rainfall, flooding, poor hygiene, sanitation, overcrowding, mosquito resistance to repellants, and insufficient political will as contributors to the persistence of malaria in this part.

Muktar and Dr. Kenneth Maduka, project manager of the Malaria Consortium, saw the need for “a global

shift” in the response to malaria in order to prevent unnecessary deaths, achieve global strategy targets and create a more equitable world.

THE NEXT WMD

Most Nigerian states surveyed scored mainly A’s and B’s in their efforts so far to meet the 2030 target for zero malaria. By April 25, 2025, the next WMD, more assessments will have been made, and stakeholders are positive that results recorded in the fight against the deadly malaria will indicate progress. They certainly agree that a lot more could still be achieved before 2030.

With additional reports from NAN

COMMISSIONER FOR HEALTH PROFILE

DR. MARCELLINA TOMI COKER

OGUN



Dr. Marcellina Tomi Coker is a Consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist with 32 years of experience in the United Kingdom National Health Service (NHS). She is also a Fellow of the Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology and an alumnus of Harvard Business School.

Dr. Tomi, as she is fondly called, was a dynamic strategic healthcare administrator in the UK before she was appointed health Commissioner by Governor Dapo Abiodun. Driven by the passion to make a difference in maternal health in her native country Nigeria, she took a career break from the UK to take on the position of Commissioner for Health in Ogun State in 2020.

A woman of many parts, she has continued to receive accolades for her professional handling of the novel coronavirus pandemic in the State. Known for her bright personality and easygoing nature, Dr. Coker is, no doubt, one of the inspiring women in leadership in the Gateway State.

For close to four years now, she has successfully championed the delivery of proactive, holistic, and patient-centred healthcare in Ogun State. Many have described her as a silent operator who, when thrown in at the deep end six weeks after relocating to Nigeria from the UK, simply made a lemonade of the lemon of a global health crisis.

Dr. Tomi Coker is a distinguished figure renowned for her significant contributions to healthcare and well-being. With a vision for transforming Ogun State into a health tourist destination, she aims to enhance the attractiveness of the health sector for residents and non-residents alike.

As an outlier, she transformed



the primary healthcare landscape of Ogun State using creativity, innovation and technology to tackle decades of inequality in access to quality healthcare in the rural areas and remote parts of the state. For instance, she deployed over 80 tricycle ambulances as appropriate technology in rural Ogun State, and championed electronic medical records to improve data collection and quality, revitalizing primary health facilities to provide a conducive environment and improved patient experience, and providing free insurance for women identified as poor from the social register and their babies for the first six months in a project named “IBIDERO” (easy labour and delivery) to address the unacceptable maternal and neonatal mortality rates observed in Nigeria. The efforts earned her and the State the Primary Healthcare Leadership Award in Southwest Nigeria conferred by Bill and Melinda Gates and UNICEF.

Dr. Coker’s strategic initiatives seek

to address health issues effectively while attracting investment into the sector. Her commitment to promoting female well-being extends globally, as evidenced by her role as Vice-Chair of the Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology-Nigeria Liaison Group. In collaboration with local professional bodies, Dr. Coker advocates tirelessly for women’s health, particularly in developing countries, with a special focus on Africa.

Her passion and dedication are driving forces in advancing the cause of women’s health on a global scale.

Dr. Tomi Coker, Ogun’s Commissioner for Health, is truly in a league of her own in the medical profession. Described as a member of the inner circle of Governor Dapo Abiodun’s government, the brilliant medical practitioner has continued to light up the Ogun State health sector with her intelligence, inventiveness and commitment.



Adaeze Chidinma Oreh (born 19 July 1979) is a Nigerian Consultant, Family Physician, Public Health Specialist and Universal health care advocate. Before her appointment as Commissioner for Health in Rivers State, she was a Consultant Physician at the Department of Hospital Services in Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Health and Head of the Department of Planning, Research and Statistics at the National Blood Service Commission.

Born on July 19, 1979, Oreh attended the College of Medicine, University of Nigeria, Nsukka and graduated with a Bachelor of Medicine, and Bachelor of Surgery degree in 2003. After completing her medical degree, she commenced her internship at the Braithwaite Memorial Specialist Hospital of the Rivers State University in Port Harcourt.

She proceeded to get a degree in International Health Management at the Imperial College Business School of the Imperial College London after the completion of her National Youth Service Corps. At the Imperial College in London, she majored in Global Health Systems, Healthcare Strategy, Healthcare Financing, Organizational Management, Health Informatics, and Innovation.

Dr. Adaeze Oreh also holds a Master's degree in public health from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. She is a Fellow of the West African College of Physicians and a Member of the National Postgraduate Medical College of Nigeria in Family Medicine and is certified in Leadership and Management in addition to Safety and Quality in Healthcare from Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, University of Washington and



the University of Bath.

After the completion of her master's degree, she volunteered with the Federal Ministry of Health for about seven months, and then she was appointed Programme Coordinator of the Abuja Centre of the National Blood Transfusion Service – a partnership project of the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Health funded under the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). She held this position for five years between 2009 and 2014. In addition, she contributed towards

the revision of the country's National Blood Policy in the National Health Act of 2014.

She is a 2019 Aspen Institute New Voices Fellow and 2023 Kofi Annan Fellow for Global Health Leadership and also sits on the Governing Council of Pamo University of Medical Sciences, Nigeria's first private university of Medical Sciences.

She is a Member of the Governing Council of PAMO University of Medical Sciences – the first privately owned University of Medical Sciences in Nigeria and acts as Director of Quality and Safety in both the PAMO University of Medical Sciences and the PAMO University of Medical Sciences Teaching Hospital.

In addition, she serves as Co-Chair of The Adolescent Project Africa who work closely with rural and underprivileged girls, women and children in maternal, newborn and children's health; women's skills acquisition and empowerment.

Dr. Adaeze was inaugurated on 23rd June 2023 as a member of the Rivers State Executive Council by His Excellency, Sir Siminalayi Fubara, the Governor of Rivers State.

As the Honourable Commissioner for Health, she is the Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry. She oversees the running of the Ministry through the Permanent Secretary. She is the leader of the health sector in Rivers State and represents the State in health issues at the federal level. This she does through the various Ministries, agencies, and departments. Other stakeholders of Health include the Permanent/Executive Secretary of RSPHCMB, the Chief Medical Director of RSHMB, heads of agencies and medical institutions, and their key officers.



Dr. Bordiya Gbansheya Buma is a Consultant Anaesthesiologist and Honourable Commissioner for Health, Taraba State. Born in Asibiti ward, Donga LGA, Taraba State, he attended Tutuala Nursery and Primary School Donga, where he obtained his First School Leaving Certificate in 1992. He then proceeded to Government Science Secondary School, Donga and obtained SSCE in 1998.

He later proceeded to the University of Maiduguri and obtained a Bachelor of Medicine, and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) in 2008. In 2012, he left the services of the Taraba State Ministry of Health, after serving a compulsory two years of bond, to Jos University Teaching Hospital, where he spent six years and specialised as an Anaesthesiologist.

He went further to obtain the fellowship of the West African College of Surgeons (FWACS) in 2019.

Dr. Gbansheya was then appointed as a Consultant Anaesthesiologist and Intensive Care Specialist by the Federal Medical Centre Jalingo. He worked as a pioneer Head of Department and Consultant anesthesiologist.

He established the first intensive Care Unit (ICU) in Taraba State and worked in that capacity for two years before relocating to Saudi Arabia to gain international experience. There, he worked as an anaesthesia specialist in the famous King Fahd Central Hospital, Jazan, before he was appointed Commissioner for Health.

Parts of his responsibilities as commissioner for health are to protect the health of the citizens of the state; provide health promotion, prevention and curative services; formulate and implement health-related policies on behalf of the state government;



6 He established the first intensive Care Unit (ICU) in Taraba State and worked in that capacity for two years before relocating to Saudi Arabia to gain international experience

regulate activities of public and private health care providers; ensure that health activities meet national and international standards; and collaborate with training institutions on manpower needs in the state.

Recently, the Taraba State University Jalingo Public Health Science Students Class of 2023, presented an award of excellence to the honorable commissioner for his outstanding performance and contributions to the development of the Taraba State Health sector.

TETFUND INSTALLS TRANSPLANT, UROLOGY EQUIPMENT IN 7 TEACHING HOSPITALS

The Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) has completed the installation of transplant and urology equipment for the treatment of prostate and kidney stone worth N250 million in seven hospitals.

Alhaji Umar Ali, the contractor handling the supply, who also represented TETFund, told newsmen shortly after the installation of the equipment at the Aminu Kano Teaching Hospital, Kano (AKTH).

He described the gesture as the first in seven government hospitals at a time for the benefit of those seeking health assistance.

He listed other benefitting health institutions to include: Aminu Kano (now Bayero Teaching Hospital University) (BUK), Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Bauchi, Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) Zaria, University of Abuja, University of Benin Teaching Hospital, Benin.

Others are: University of Jos Teaching Hospital; and University of Maiduguri Teaching Hospital, Maiduguri.

He said that those seeking treatment for kidney stone, and kidney failure are on the increase on daily basis, hence intervention by TETFund to find a lasting solution to their health challenges.

According to him, the fund has installed the equipment, tested and discovered to be in good working condition.



There will not be need to open up patients, but carry out the operation successfully without bleeding

He added that “doctors have started using the equipment for research and practicals in the university, but all credits go to TETFund, because without their intervention, it may not have been possible.”

Prof. Sani Aji from Bayero University, Kano, said with the modern technology, there may not be any need to cut open any patient.

He said that “before now, after patients have been operated on, they will stay in the hospital for like between 10-12 days before discharge, but now, they can go the same day of the operation

if there is no complications.

“Very few centres have the facilities and they are all private, but with TETFund intervention, this laser surgery will help a lot.”

On his part, Dr Przemyslaw Zugaj, one of the medical personnel invited from Poland to train doctors on how to handle the laser equipment on patients when conducting surgeries.

Zugaj explained that the surgery will destroy stones in the kidney and patients are checked properly, while it may not be necessary to repeat the surgery and it is cheaper.

He said with proper handling of the laser machine, there will not be need to open up patients, but carry out the operation successfully without bleeding.

One of the participants, Prof. Samuel Osaghae, also a Consultant Urologist from University of Benin, described the intervention as a special project.

He said the installation would facilitate indoor urology centre for kidney, urethra bladder and prostate, which would impact healthcare delivery in Nigeria positively.

Dr Haruna Usman from Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Bauchi, said the gesture would be extended to other communities.

“This will reduce waste of resources and people will no longer need to travel out for surgeries,” he said.

WMD:

FG PLANS HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON RETHINK MALARIA INITIATIVE

Federal Government has scheduled a high-level meeting for May 3, to discuss the implementation of the Rethink Malaria Initiative.

The Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Prof. Muhammad Pate, disclosed this on Thursday in Abuja during the commemoration of the 2024 World Malaria Day (WMD).

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the World Malaria Day, celebrated annually on April 25, is to recognise global efforts toward malaria control.

The global observance has “Accelerating the fight against malaria for a more equitable world” as theme for the 2024.

Malaria, a disease caused by a parasite transmitted through the bite of infected mosquitoes, claims the lives of thousands of people each year, with children in sub-Saharan Africa most affected.

Nigeria, as Africa’s most populous nation, also bears a significant malaria burden globally.

However, the 2022 Nigeria Malaria Report indicates a 55 per cent reduction in malaria death rates between 2000 and 2021, with a 26 per cent drop in incidence during the same period.

Pate, represented by Dr Godwin Ntadom, the National Coordinator, National Malaria Elimination Programme, said that the Rethink Malaria Initiative is to redefine strategies in the fight against malaria.



Prof. Muhammad Pate,

He added that “the meeting will convene key stakeholders from government agencies, healthcare organisations, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), and international partners to strategise on innovative approaches to combat malaria effectively.

“With malaria remaining leading cause of morbidity and mortality in Nigeria, there is urgent need for renewed efforts and collaborative action to address the root causes and challenges associated with the disease.”

According to him, the initiative seeks to leverage new technologies, strengthen healthcare systems and mobilise resources to achieve significant progress in malaria control and elimination.

Dr Alex Chimbaru, the Deputy Country Representative of WHO, highlighted the theme “Accelerating the Fight Against Malaria for a More Equitable World” and emphasised the need for collective commitment to change the narrative and achieve progress and equity in combating malaria.

Chimbaru discussed how malaria disproportionately affects vulnerable

populations such as pregnant women, infants, children under five years, refugees, migrants, and internally displaced people, perpetuating cycles of poverty and inequity.

He provided statistics from the Global Malaria Report of 2023 to illustrate the magnitude of the malaria burden, particularly in the WHO African region, highlighting countries contributing to the increase in cases.

He acknowledged challenges such as climate change and humanitarian emergencies but expressed hope about sustained progress in malaria control and prevention efforts.

Dr. Gbenga Jokodola, the Chairman of the 2024 World Malaria Day Planning Committee, emphasised the need for accurate diagnosis and appropriate treatment of fever suspected to be malaria.

Jokodola highlighted the importance of confirming whether fever is due to malaria through testing and then administering appropriate medication, which includes acetaminophen combination therapy drugs.

He also addressed the issue of fake malaria drugs and stressed the importance of ensuring patients received correct medication in the proper manner.

Dr. Michael Adekunle, the CEO of Roll Back Malaria, advocated holistic approach to healthcare that involves strengthening the entire health system, including infrastructure, data collection, surveillance, and interventions for diseases like malaria, HIV, and TB.



'FG INTENSIFIES FIGHT AGAINST CANCER'

The Federal Government has intensified the fight against growing threat of cancer in the country.

Dr. Tunji Alausa, the Minister of State for Health and Social Welfare, said this at a one-day workshop organised by the National Institute for Cancer Research and Treatment (NICRAT) in Abuja on Thursday.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN)

reports that the workshop, with "Improving Access to Cancer Care in Nigeria" as its theme, was organised in collaboration with Siemens Healthineers.

It is aimed at fostering collaboration between public and private sectors to enhance cancer care outcomes in Nigeria.

Alausa underscored the ministry's commitment, through NICRAT, to

revolutionise cancer care by intensifying awareness and facilitating access to treatment and research.

He hailed the partnership with Siemens as pivotal step toward a future devoid of cancer, citing initiatives geared toward expanding the pool of cancer experts through training, fortifying the administration of the cancer health fund, and upgrading cancer treatment and diagnosis centres.

Moreover, he said, strategic alliances with international entities like the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) were aimed at enhancing capacity building for cancer care across Nigeria.

He said the workshop was a platform to address challenges in cancer care and foster collaborative efforts.

The Special Adviser to the President on Health, Dr Salma Ibrahim-Anas, said "the workshop provides a platform for the country to exchange knowledge, share best practices, and forge new alliances that will drive progress in the field of cancer care."

She added that through collaborative initiatives, the country could leverage the expertise, resources, and technology of donor partners to facilitate access to high-quality care, promote early detection, and enhance care.

She called for the involvement of community leaders into the cancer fight in the country.

Dr Kevin Massoudi, the Healthineers Vice President and Head of Public Sector Engagement at Siemens, commended government's proactive approach in modernising cancer care centres.

Massoudi underscored government's emphasis on sustainable access and

community engagement in combating this daunting public health crisis.

The workshop also witnessed insights from prominent figures such as the wife of former Governor of Kebbi, Dr Zainab Shinkafi-Bagudu, who underlined the critical role of radiotherapy in cancer treatment.

She also called for increased treatment centres in Nigeria.

Prof. Ahmed Aminu, the Director-General, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), reiterated the agency's collaboration with Nigeria in identifying cancer care needs and securing essential support.

Aminu underscored the importance of addressing challenges faced by institutions like the National Institute for Cancer Research and Treatment and highlighted successful virtual training programmes aimed at enhancing healthcare professionals' skills.

Prof. Usman Aliyu, the Director-General of NICRAT, underscored comprehensive approach to cancer care which encompassed awareness, prevention, screening, treatment and research.

Aliyu stressed the need for unified efforts and strategic partnerships to make substantial impact on cancer care and control in the country.(NAN)





UK DONATES £1BN TO FIGHT MALARIA IN NIGERIA

United Kingdom has contributed about one billion pounds to the global fund against malaria and other diseases in Nigeria for the period of 2024 to 2026.

Dr. Ebere Anyachukwu, the Health Adviser, British High Commission (BHC) said this in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) on Thursday in Abuja, in commemoration of the World Malaria Day.

Anyachukwu said that government of the UK contributed the money to a global fund that mobilised resources for countries to fight diseases.

According to him, the one billion pounds is added to the funds coming from other donors, to be managed by global fund to tackle malaria and other diseases in Nigeria.

He added that it was from those funding that payment for things like insecticide, treated bed nets, diagnostics testing for malaria and also for chemoprevention were made.

"There are some states in Nigeria

where malaria is seasonal. Those are states where chemoprevention is used to prevent children from coming down with malaria.

"In those states, malaria spreads in a few months within a year, and during that period, there is a high level of malaria transmission in children, resulting in lots of deaths," he said.

The health adviser said that children in such states were usually given malaria drugs, whether or not they have malaria.

"These are part of measures by global fund that have significantly reduced the level of sicknesses and deaths in children," he said.

He said that the UK was a big contributor to the global fund, which is currently supporting about 13 states in Nigeria.

He listed the states to include Adamawa, Delta, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kwara, Niger, Ogun, Osun, Yobe and Taraba.

With the global funding support, there has been a significant reduction of malaria related deaths in children in Nigeria.

"With the global funding support, there has been a significant reduction of malaria related deaths in children in Nigeria.

"In 2008, the World Health Organisation (WHO) estimated that Nigeria had about 221, 000 malaria related deaths. But by 2022, the figure was about 189,000 deaths.

"There is a significant reduction due to the intervention of global fund, even when there was an increase in the nation's population.

"Lots of lives have been saved over the years because people now have access to health care facilities funded by these interventions," he said.



BETSY BENE OBASEKI:

**A BEACON OF CHANGE,
JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT**

BETSY BENE OBASEKI:

A BEACON OF CHANGE, JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT



Betsy Bene Obaseki

Business Development. She also served as Managing Director of the Bank's subsidiary - BOI Investment and Trust Company Limited. Prior to her tenure at BOI, she played instrumental roles in other renowned financial institutions such as Leasing Company of Nigeria and Messers Akintola Williams & Co., carving a path marked by excellence and dedication to good causes.

At the national level, Mrs. Obaseki participated in the crafting of the Nigeria Enterprise Development Program (NEDEP) and served in the Central Bank's Committee on Infrastructural Development for the Power Sector

She is a member of the Institute of Directors, a fellow of the Institute of Credit Administrators, a member of the Nigerian Institute of Management, as well as the Association of Investment & Pension Managers.

Her commitment to excellence extends beyond the boardroom, as she continues to serve as a beacon of hope and progress in her capacity as the First Lady of Edo State.

Driven by a deep-seated aversion to injustice and inequality, Betsy Obaseki embarked on a mission to combat pressing societal issues, focusing on the protection and empowerment of women, children and youth.

Under the umbrella of the Centre for Women and Youth Development, she has spearheaded several impactful

projects aimed at fostering sustainable development and women and youth empowerment.

From the Edo Women for Agriculture and Enterprise project - empowering rural women with skills in poultry farming, to the establishment of the National Obstetric Fistula Clinic which provides free surgeries for VVF patients as well as the establishment of Betsy's Angels Shelter - providing a haven for victims of gender-based violence, The Edo First Lady's initiatives resonate with compassion and efficacy. The Edo Youth Academy, another initiative of hers, offers vital training on relevant skills for young people whilst campaigns such as "End Violence Against Children" and the establishment of the Edo State Gender-Based Violence Management Committee, underscore her unwavering commitment to social justice.

Her efforts have not gone unnoticed, as she has been honoured with numerous prestigious awards, including a Doctor of Business Administration from Well Springs University and the Award of Excellence from the Westminster Foundation for Democracy.

Her dedication to advancing women's football and her relentless pursuit of positive change have earned her accolades internationally and locally, such as the Sportsville Award and the Sheroes Award in Nigeria and the highly coveted FIFA award in March 2022, which was specifically for "promoting Women's football and empowerment in the world"

In a recent national poll, she was recognised as the "Most Prolific First Lady in Nigeria," a testament to her impact and influence in driving meaningful change. To crown it all, Mrs. Obaseki was recently conferred with a much sought-after Doctorate Degree in Business Administration from the distinguished University of Benin, further solidifying her reputation as a visionary leader.



One of our partners, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) came for a meeting with some team members from the Nigeria Governors Spouses' Forum. Their discussions bordered on some of the projects the two organisations are collaborating on.



In April some members of the Nigeria Governors Spouses' Forum (NGSF) held a technical meeting with The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) to advance conversations on a partnership endeavour that will address Mother to Child Transmission of HIV.



Some members of the Nigerian Red Cross Society visited the Secretariat recently to advance conversations on potential partnership areas between them and the Nigeria Governors Spouses' Forum. The Chairperson of the NGSF, Amb. Dr. Olufunke AbdulRazak was in attendance to lead the discussions.

OGUN FIRST LADY DRUMS SUPPORT FOR WOMEN FARMERS

The wife of Ogun State Governor, Mrs. Bamidele Abiodun, has called for support for women farmers.

She stated this while speaking at a two-day Agritech empowerment programme for over 150 women farmers in Ijebu Ode, Ogun State.

Abiodun said that conscious and deliberate efforts from both the governments and other stakeholders would go a long way to achieve sustainable development goals of eradicating poverty, and boosting food production while also achieving zero hunger.

The governor's wife lamented that despite the fact that women accounted for about 70 per cent of farmers in the country, they were still very poor and had no access to funding, unlike their male counterparts.

The Agritech training was put together by the founder of Adeola Azeez Community Care Foundation, Mrs. Adeola Azeez.

The Ogun first lady explained, "While women play a dominant role in most value chains, the financial gains of women in these sectors is still much less than men.

"This is primarily because while women make up a larger per cent of labour force in agriculture, they are less likely to be the ones paid for production, especially among smallholder farmers.

"They are also less likely to get access to finance even though studies show that investment in women in agriculture has a higher likelihood of success, higher impact and returns if given as a loan. There is a higher repayment rate.



"These are all in addition to the fact that investments in women are also more likely to be paid forward to other women as we see today with the support of Mrs. Adeola Azeez. So, we all must use every opportunity to invest in women for meaningful gains in the agricultural sector," the Ogun first lady noted.

While lauding Mrs. Azeez for putting up the training, Abiodun said that the roles of technology in agriculture in changing the fortunes of the women farmers cannot be overemphasised.

Welcoming the participants to the training, the CEO of the foundation, Azeez, stated that the training was put together to commemorate this year's International Women's Day.

She explained that she had always used the annual occasion to celebrate women in each sector of the economy

Azeez added that her focus this year was to empower the women farmers through training on various technologies that they could deploy to improve their socio-economic fortunes in agriculture and boost food production.

She, however, demanded that the government and other stakeholders should set up interventions that would help the women farmers conquer the challenges of lack of access to funding, global market, land, machinery and other farming inputs, which were having adverse effects upon their farming enterprise

"We are gathered today to celebrate our women's efforts in promoting a better society through agriculture and food production. We are gathered to collectively empower the women in agriculture through the transformative power of technology," she asserted.



WIFE OF SOKOTO GOVERNOR DISTRIBUTES FOOD ITEMS TO WOMEN

The wife of Sokoto State Governor, Hajiya Fatima Ahmed Aliyu, has distributed food items to 3,000 women in the state to assist them in cushioning the effect of economic hardships faced by Nigerians.

Among the items distributed were cartons of spaghetti, tubers of yam, vegetable oil and bags of rice among others.

She also assured women of the present administration's determination to support them in the state in order to boost their businesses.

She similarly assured women that, "Already all hands are on desk to ensure women receive free medical services in the state."

Hajiya Fatima further stated that "Women are part of Ahmad Aliyu's administration having appointed commissioners, directors and special assistants".



She emphasized that this effort was provided by Governor Ahmed Aliyu led government for the people to cushion the effects of the economic downturn during this holy month of Ramadan.

Hajiya Fatima disclosed that the bags of rice had just been delivered and decided to distribute them as carefully organised by the commissioner for

Women Affairs, Hajiya Hadiza Ahmed Shagari.

The bags of rice were shared among different strata and organizations in the state.

Among the beneficiaries were women groups, those present at the distribution centre and representatives from all 244 wards across Sokoto State.

BAYELSA FIRST LADY COMMENDS TINUBU FOR EMPOWERING WOMEN

The wife of the Governor of Bayelsa State, Dr. Gloria Diri has commended the wife of the President, Senator Oluremi Tinubu, for empowering one hundred and twenty indigent women farmers with cash grants.

Mrs. Diri made the commendation in her goodwill message in Uyo, the Akwa Ibom State capital during the launch of the Renewed Hope Initiative (RHI) Women Agricultural Support Programme.

The Bayelsa first lady, who is also the chairman of the RHI in the South-South, noted that the activities and programmes of the RHI were a paradigm shift from what was obtained in the past where women farmers rarely received support in this magnitude to improve farm produce in their quest to provide food for their families and have enough left for economic value.

She stated that the presentation of the grant to the women from the six states marked a significant milestone in the efforts towards ensuring food availability and sufficiency in the region.

“Your Excellency, for me and my sisters, wives of all the governors in the region, your initiative to reach out and empower our women is worthy of applause and deserving of the loudest ovation.

“The reasons are not far-fetched. We are an agrarian society. Agriculture and aquaculture were our major occupations before the first discovery of oil in commercial quantity at Oloibiri, Bayelsa State in 1956.

“However, the exploration and



Dr. Gloria Diri

exploitation of the vast oil and gas resources in our region had left us contending with various challenges.

“We live daily with man-made and natural disasters occasioned by environmental degradation, loss of farmlands and livelihoods, health hazards, erosion, ocean surge as well as perennial flooding witnessed in its highest magnitude in 2022.

“We the wives of governors in the Niger Delta have rolled out different programmes targeted towards reducing poverty, hunger, gender inequalities, and gender and sexual-based violence within the ambits of available resources and also leveraging on support from well-meaning individuals and organizations. However, our efforts are not enough, hence we are happy to see this first-of-its-kind engagement.

“Permit me to express my immense gratitude and that of my sisters to you, the mother of our great nation, for citing the RHI Information Communication Technology ICT Center in Calaber and the provision of

50,000 boos each for the educational advancement of our students.

“Here we are again today. We have converged on Uyo to receive and draw strength from your benevolence through the RHI. We are optimistic that in no distant time, we will invite you to come for the harvest and festival of food for women and children in Nigeria,” she said.

Speaking further, Mrs. Diri said that the farming tools, inputs and cash grants would boost economic growth, and stimulate new horizons for the beneficiaries to enhance and achieve food availability and sufficiency in the Niger Delta.

While reiterating the allegiance of the Southern Governors’ Wives to the success of the RHI, she also urged beneficiaries and the one hundred Persons Living with Disabilities from Akwa Ibom State who also received cash grants of one hundred thousand naira each to aid their businesses to utilize the funds provided to improve their living standards.



KEBBI GOVERNOR’S WIFE DISTRIBUTES PALLIATIVES TO WIDOWS OF FALLEN SOLDIERS

The wife of Kebbi State governor, Hajiya Zainab Nasare Nasir Idris, has expressed deep sympathy with the widows of fallen heroes, saying the administration of her husband will provide the necessary succour to them and their children to cushion the effect of daily life challenges.

Hajiya Nasare gave this assurance during the distribution of palliatives to the widows of 223 Battalion Zuru.

The senior wife of the governor led her co-wife, Hajiya Nafisa, to the Army Barracks in Zuru to condole with the families of the departed soldiers and provide them with food items and cash.

Hajiya Nasare enjoined the widows to strengthen their faith in God

Hajiya Nasare in a solemn voice enjoined the widows to strengthen their faith in God because death has been ordained as divine predestination on all mortals.

She advised the widows to strive hard to maintain the moral and educational upbringing of their children who are now orphans by circumstances.



Hajiya Zainab Nasare Nasir Idris

GOMBE GOVERNOR'S WIFE EMPOWERS PHYSICALLY-CHALLENGED WOMEN



No fewer than 2,000 physically challenged and less privileged women have received empowerment items from the wife of Gombe State governor, Asma'u Yahaya.

Yahaya said the support would help them to fend for themselves during the current economic hardship bedeviling the country.

Commencing the distribution of the empowerment tools at the Women Centre, the governor's wife reiterated government's commitment towards ensuring even and equitable distribution of dividends of democracy to the people.

The items included tricycles, grinding and sewing machines.

She said, "The first lady's office will continue to assist women with what it takes to improve their livelihood by developing their potentials to become financially self-reliant."

Also speaking, Commissioner for Women's Affairs, Mrs. Naomi Awak, commended the first lady for her passion in helping the poor and vulnerable, "by not only putting food on their table, but providing them with requisite skills and knowledge on how to make ends meet".

The commissioner assured the governor's wife of full support of

Gombe women whom she said were solidly behind the government of Muhammadu Yahaya for carrying them along in all strata of government, thereby giving them a sense of belonging.

In the same vein, the state APC women leader, Lumbi Abubakar, lauded the first lady for her continued assistance, assuring that the women would remain strongly united.

"Shun all rumours and political propaganda, so that together, we will stand for Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya's government in years to come," Abubakar added.

NGF Hosts Workshop to Enhance Agricultural Investment Through Land Reform

The Federal Government of Nigeria has reiterated its commitment to strengthening agricultural development in the country through inclusive land-based investment in the sector for increased productivity, income generation, and food security in the country.

Land-based investment in Nigeria for a long time has been marred by various challenges ranging from lack of clarity on governance mechanisms; weak administrative support systems for stakeholders; poor data; little or no recognition for inclusion, gender equality, and cultural values; poor engagement with host communities; disproportionate compensation and resettlement for persons displaced. These have impacted negatively on the cost of doing business, agriculture value chain, livelihood, environment and ultimately, economic development.

In addressing some of these challenges, the Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF), in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Finance through a \$750 million World Bank funded programme - State Action on Business Enabling Reforms (SABER) - seeks to promote and support the domestication of a Framework for Responsible and Inclusive Land-Intensive Agriculture (FRILIA) at State-level. Associated reforms include the passage of a legal framework clearly setting out the governance and administrative mechanisms as well as a strong commitment to international and proven principles that guarantee



recognition, respect and protection of land rights and human rights.

In the last quarter of 2023, the NGF supported seven states (Borno, Edo, Ekiti, Kebbi, Nasarawa, Niger and Zamfara) through the process of drafting their executive orders and governance structure to support implementation. Imo, Oyo and Plateau states also leveraged the model templates developed and disseminated by the NGF in drafting their Orders. Each state's Executive Order beyond establishing the governance and administrative mechanisms, emphasises the State's commitment to ensuring inclusion and gender equality, environmental and social sustainability, food security, responsible natural resource management amongst others.

To support their efforts at effective implementation of the framework, the NGF, Organised a 3-day

workshop 15th – 17th April 2024, attended by representatives of the FRILIA technical committee of the respective States. The workshop was kicked-off by remarks from the **Director General, Asishana Bayo Okauru, SABER National Program Coordinator (Director Home Finance, Federal Ministry of Finance) Dr. Ali Mohammed** and the **World Bank SABER Task Team Leader, Bertine Kamphius**. The trio admonished the participants to engage the experts in domestication discussions as they go through the building blocks for implementation. Participants were assured of the support of the various organisations likewise the Federal Government. The States were encouraged to leverage available technical assistance as advisories and capacity building support were free under the SABER program.

The workshop provided further conceptual understanding of the

principles; walking through use cases and implementation frameworks domesticated across countries and contexts. Participants were also provided hypothetical case scenarios where they had to apply the understanding gained and identify domestication pathways for principles and implementation frameworks. Forerunner States such as Kaduna and Ogun State who were early adopters of FRILIA were also invited to share implementation experience and lessons. This created an opportunity for peer learning and exchange of ideas on how to do things differently and better. Discussions at the workshop covered Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM), Stakeholder Engagement, Community Needs-Assessment, Environmental and Social Risk Management (ESRM), Land Access, Easement & Involuntary Resettlement Management, Negotiating a Fair Agreement, Valuation and Compensation, Outgrower and Food Security, Global Memorandum of Understanding.



Participants expressed delight at the opportunity to participate in the workshop which they described as timely and responsive to the challenges facing land-based intensive investment, especially in the Agri-business sector.

Mrs. Blessing Ada Ebuka, the acting Permanent Secretary, Imo State Ministry of Finance, noted that the knowledge she got from the workshop would that Imo state would become part of the states maintaining FRILLA recommended best practices.

“The framework if implemented fully will lure easy investment in land and deepen the impact in agriculture. I was able to understand the importance of community assessment,” she stated

Sharing his own takeaways, from the event, - **Kevin Uwaibi, Director Edo State Investment Promotional Office,** said, “This training further stresses the fact that there’s need for engagement, sustainable investment and for

state government to collaborate with communities over investment opportunities. It buttressed the need to get an MOU with Investors before implementation. I hope the training is going to be continuous as I look forward to another gathering to review our progress or performance so far”

Speaking in a similar vein, **Engr. Olugbenga Odesanmi, Perm Secretary of Ekiti State Ministry of Agriculture and Food security,** disclosed that he would ensure they apply the framework in addressing land management issues and poor inflow of investment in the state.

“It’s an opportunity to meet a lot of people and learn a lot from peers and at the same time discovering the diverse nature of challenges in agriculture. The workshop for me is an eye opener. Ekiti state is a compact state. What we need is more land management.” He stated.

Emmanuel Ogu, Head, Investment Promotion and Research, Niger State Investment & Promotion Agency, Niger State, noted that the workshop was timely.

He added, “Nigeria as a whole can get it right with this framework. It is one thing to have a system and another to have a system that actually works. Niger state occupies 10% of Nigeria’s land mass and we intend to use a large percent of this land mass to develop and onboard more small holder farmers with the assistance of this framework.”

The workshop culminated in states developing an implementation plan for FRILIA, mapping out key stakeholders, reform steps, and estimated resourcing required to implement or establish each component as well as process. Timelines were also assigned to each activity in the plan for effective monitoring and evaluation of progress.

AS GOVERNORS HELP STEER THE HCD JOURNEY

The National Economic Council (NEC) in 2018 initiated the National Human Capital Development Programme to address poverty and ensure sustainable economic growth which is critical to Human Capital Development (HCD). The HCD Programme is an effort to accelerate more and better-streamlined investments in people for equitable and economic growth in Nigeria.

A preliminary list of interventions has been identified across HCD thematic areas for States to drive implementation

Health and Nutrition	Education	Labour force
1 Operationalize the BHCPF ¹	7 Roll out interventions for marginalized boys	12 Improve management and strategic focus of TVET ⁴
2 Launch free family planning programs	8 Roll out girls' education interventions	13 Improve access to job market information
3 Launch effective financing mechanisms	9 Revamp NCE ² and optimize the process of teachers' certification	14 Implement legislative action e.g. local content, to increase hiring
4 Operationalize the National Policy on Nutrition	10 Improve teacher development and performance management	15 Assist SMEs financially by providing access to credit
5 Recruit and train health workers including CHEWs ³	11 Revise curriculum and methodology of teaching to a more directive style	16 Assist SMEs technically
6 Leverage private sector to fill capacity gaps in service delivery		

In its first iteration, Nigeria’s Human Capital Programme (HCD 1.0) set clear targets and commitments for investment priorities, accelerating investments in human capital, and expanding stakeholder support to drive outcomes in Health, Education, and Labour Force participation in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030. The vision has set clear plans and targets across these three thematic areas with six critical outcome areas and sixteen high-impact Interventions. For example, the programme will support the States to launch free family planning programmes, recruit, and train health workers, improve child education, teacher development programmes and access to job market information, among others.



State Governors have championed the HCD agenda at the sub-national level, demonstrating strong political leadership and commitment to accelerate poverty eradication and improve the overall quality of life of their people. This has been demonstrated in the constitution of State HCD Councils, chaired by Deputy Governors, with Commissioners of key thematic areas as members, appointing a Focal Person to drive the technical objectives of the state priorities.

To sustain the momentum, the new Administration, through the National Economic Council (NEC), chaired by His Excellency, Senator Kashim Shettima, and the Nigeria

Governors Forum (NGF), is inaugurating the Core Working Group (CWG) comprising of the NGF, Office of the Vice President, thematic Ministries, development partners and the private sector to accelerate the efforts of the next phase of the HCD programme – the HCD 2.0 (2024 - 2027). The CWG will continue to leverage the convening power of the NGF and NEC to promote human capital policy reforms, actions, and innovations that accelerate more and better investments at the sub-national level. We are reassessing and designing a comprehensive roadmap for the HCD programme going forward to ensure that the programme activities align with the overall HCD agenda.

In launching HCD 2.0, the CWG will redesign a strategy aligned with the Renewed Hope agenda of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, aimed at improving implementations and the overall governance and funding structure to ensure programme sustainability and continuity independent of the political landscape. Ms. Rukaiya El-Rufai, the Special Adviser on National Economic Council (NEC) and Climate Change, will coordinate the HCD 2.0 efforts.

States are eager to recommit to HCD 2.0 and work with the CWG to ensure the roadmap is achieved through a co-development and co-creation process. In this phase of engagements and advocacy, States are expected to realize their State-specific HCD plans and targets, build their HCI and data strengths, access available funding and receive technical support that accelerates investment in their people. The CWG team will identify a few States and begin its advocacy visits for these engagements to reaffirm its commitment to ensuring proper implementation of Human Capital at the subnational level.

The Core Working Group will continue to leverage relationships, working closely with governments, development partners, the private sector, civil society organizations, and other key stakeholders to achieve development goals that accelerate Human Capital in Nigeria.



DANGOTE COMMENDS GOVERNOR YAHAYA, MULLS INVESTMENT IN GOMBE

President of Dangote Group, Alhaji Aliko Dangote, has commended the Gombe State Governor, Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya, for providing an enabling environment for manufacturers in the state. Business in Nigeria.

He also emphasised Gombe's abundance of solid mineral resources as well as the impressive infrastructure, including the sprawling 1000-hectare Muhammadu Buhari Industrial Park situated near the 40-megawatt Dadinkowa power plant.

This strategic location not only offered ample space for industrial expansion but also ensures access to reliable power supply, a crucial factor for sustained industrial operations

The Governor said this strategic location not only offered ample space for industrial expansion but also ensures access to reliable power supply, a crucial factor for sustained industrial operations.

He also highlighted the centrality of Gombe State in the North East sub region, serving as a commercial nerve centre with peaceful atmosphere, positioning the state as an attractive destination for investors seeking stability and growth opportunities.



NASARAWA STATE SET TO COMMISSION NIGERIA'S LARGEST LITHIUM PROCESSING PLANT

The federal government will, in May, commission Nigeria's first and largest lithium processing plant, which produces about 4000 metric tonnes daily in Nasarawa state. The Nasarawa state Governor, Abdullahi Sule, disclosed this while briefing journalists in Abuja on the forthcoming Nasarawa Investment Summit (NIS) 2024, which will be held from May 15 to May 16 in Lafia, the state capital.

Governor Sule, who said that he had already met with the Minister of Solid Minerals, Mr. Dele Alake, about the commissioning of the Lithium Processing Plant, added that the state's residents would benefit from its industrial revolution in the state.

He said, "I welcome the Honourable Minister Dele Alake at the Ministry of Solid Minerals. The invitation was for him to agree on the commissioning of the first and largest lithium processing plant we will have in Nigeria, which will produce 4000 metric tonnes a day, which is coming up in May in Nasarawa.

"Industrialisation plays a significant role in economic development, creating employment opportunities, and improving citizens' quality of life.

These are areas of focus for us in Nasarawa state. Sule said the government and the Nigerian government met over potential foreign partners interested in investing in the plant, stating that a Russian delegation also visited the state.

According to the governor, the state will create a bureau to oversee the many signed deals that need implementation.

Similarly, at this 2024 summit, we will create a bureau to carry out such activity. And I'm happy that one of the roundtable issues will be energy and focus, and that's where the GACN comes in handy.

He said Nigeria is perceived mainly as a country with significant oil and gas reserves, stating that the government has more gas than oil.

"The country has over 200 trillion standard cubic feet of gas reserves.

And yet, 40 billion barrels of oil. What that means is that Nasarawa is also just coming up.

Just for the site talks of it, one of the reasons why all the drilling aspects have not been completed until now is because they came across gas too early during the operation in Nasarawa state.

"I have been following that well and want to ensure it's completed as soon as possible. They came across gas too early, so they had to do what we call the importation of water for them to continue with the operation. So that's how blessed Nigeria is and indeed Nasarawa state in this case," he said.

He said that the state government would partner with interested investors to promote the Lithium industry in the state and hasten the construction of the Lithium processing plant.

EKITI EMERGES SECOND STATE TO ESTABLISH ELECTRICITY REGULATORY BODY



NIGERIA
GOVERNORS'
FORUM



Ekiti State Governor, Biodun Oyebanji

The Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC or the Commission) has issued an order to transfer regulatory oversight of the electricity market in Ekiti State from the Commission to the Ekiti State Electricity Regulatory Bureau (EERB).

9 Ekiti has emerged as the second state to float its own electricity regulatory body, after the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) announced earlier that Enugu had signified its intention to fully exit the control of the apex industry regulator.

Couched after the Enugu model, NERC in the document signed by the Chairman of the Commission, Sanusi Garba and the Commissioner, Legal, Licensing and Compliance, Dafe Akpeneye, stated that the action was in compliance with the amended Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (CFRN) and the Electricity Act 2023, as amended.

President Muhammadu Buhari had in March 2023 assented to the law, which now empowers states to licence,

generate, transmit and distribute electricity. His successor, President Bola Tinubu, has also made at least two amendments to the law since he took over the reins of power in May, 2023. The electricity market in Nigeria was previously centralised, but the law now grants legislative autonomy to federating states in Nigeria to legislate on the generation, transmission and distribution of electricity within their jurisdictions.

NERC stated that the Government of Ekiti State had complied with the conditions precedent in the laws, duly notified it and requested for the transfer of regulatory oversight of the intrastate electricity market in the state to the body to be known as the Ekiti State Electricity Regulatory Bureau (EERB).

According to the apex regulatory commission for the power sector, when the process is fully completed, Ekiti shall assume responsibilities for intrastate supply and distribution of electricity in the state.

“In compliance with the amended Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (CFRN) and the Electricity

Act 2023 (Amended), the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC or the Commission) has issued an order to transfer regulatory oversight of the electricity market in Ekiti State from the Commission to the Ekiti State Electricity Regulatory Bureau (EERB).

“Recall that with the Electricity Act (EA) 2023, the Commission retains the role as central regulator with regulatory oversight on the inter-state/international generation, transmission, supply, trading and system operations. “The EA also mandates any state that intends to establish and regulate intrastate electricity markets to deliver a formal notification of its processes and requests NERC to transfer regulatory authority over electricity operations in the state to the State Regulator.

“Based on this, the Government of Ekiti State complied with the conditions precedent in the laws, duly notified NERC and requested for the transfer of regulatory oversight of the intrastate electricity market in Ekiti State,” it stated.

The commission added that the

transfer Order by NERC has the following provisions: “Direct Benin Electricity Distribution Company (BEDC) and Ibadan Electricity Distribution Company PLC (IBEDC) to incorporate a subsidiary (BEDC SubCo and IBEDC SubCo) to assume responsibilities for intrastate supply and distribution of electricity in Ekiti State from BEDC and IBEDC.

“BEDC and IBEDC shall complete the incorporation of BEDC SubCo and IBEDC SubCo within 60 days from April 22, 2024 and the sub-companies shall apply for and obtain licences for the intrastate supply and distribution of electricity from Ekiti Electricity Regulatory Bureau (EERB), among other directives.”

All cross-border transactions involving the national grid, it said, shall be subject to the approval of the commission in accordance with the constitution and the Electricity Act.

It stressed that the EERB shall have the exclusive responsibility of determining and adopting an end-user tariff methodology applicable within its area of regulatory oversight.

“Where IBEDC SUBCO receives

electricity from grid connected plants, the contracts and tariffs applicable for generation and transmission services shall be approved by the commission. “The final end-user tariffs approved by EERC shall be the exclusive tariffs that apply in Ekiti state and all tariff policy support for end-use customers in Ekiti state shall be the responsibility of the Ekiti state government,” NERC stated. Also, NERC has announced the impending transfer of regulatory oversight of the electricity market in Ondo State to the Ondo State Electricity Regulatory Bureau (OSERB).

It therefore directed BEDC to also incorporate a subsidiary to assume responsibilities for intrastate supply and distribution of electricity in Ondo State from the Distribution Company. “BEDC shall complete the incorporation of BEDC SubCo within 60 days from 22 April 2024 and the sub-company shall apply for and obtain licence for the intrastate supply and distribution of electricity from OSERB, among other directives. All transfers envisaged by this order shall be completed by October 22, 2024,” it stated.



OYO STATE GOVT IN \$100M DEAL WITH SHELL FOR GAS DISTRIBUTION NETWORK ACROSS STATE

The Oyo State Government and Shell Nigeria Gas (SNG) have signed an agreement worth over \$100 million to develop a gas supply and distribution infrastructure that will deliver gas to industrial and commercial users in the state.

A statement by Shell Nigeria's Media Relations Manager, Abimbola Essien-Nelson, disclosed that SNG would build and operate the gas distribution network which will serve customers across Oyo State for 20 years.

According to the statement, the project will start with the construction of gas distribution infrastructure along a 15km pipeline route, adding that it will grow to deliver up to 60 million standard cubic feet of gas per day across the state.

On his part, the Managing Director SNG, Ralph Gbobo, said the agreement was a significant milestone for SNG and Oyo State to boost economic activities in Nigeria by supplying industries and manufacturers with natural gas, a more reliable, cost-efficient and

environmentally friendly source of energy.

"The gas distribution project will be a game-changer in the industrialization drive of the Oyo State Government and help boost internally generated revenue and result in more job opportunities.

"For SNG the project is a milestone in our effort to continue growing the energy supply to businesses in Nigeria in line with Nigeria's ambition to drive progress on the back of natural gas availability across Nigeria under the Decade of Gas initiative,"

The governor of Oyo State, Seyi Makinde, had written on his X account that the deal was signed in London, adding that the project worth about \$100 million.

He said the project also involved the construction of a Pressure Reduction and Metering Station (PRMS) and laying of pipelines by SNG on a Build-Own-Operate-Transfer (BOOT) basis.

"We were in London to sign the final investment agreement for the Oyo

State Government-Shell Nigeria Gas Infrastructure Development and Distribution project.

"This gas project worth about \$100 million, involves the construction of a Pressure Reduction and Metering Station (PRMS) and laying of pipelines by SNG on a Build-Own-Operate-Transfer (BOOT) basis. Ownership will be transferred to Oyo State after 20 years.

"With this agreement in place, we are looking forward to the first flow of gas to industrial, manufacturing and commercial entities as well as our independent power project in Oyo State in 18 months," Makinde added.

In addition, the managing Director of the Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Ltd and Chairman, Shell Companies in Nigeria, Osagie Okunbor said:

"This event points to the value of partnership as Shell continues to power progress in Nigeria through more and cleaner energy solutions for commercial and industrial customers.



IMPAIRMENTS:

LAGOS GOVERNMENT SEEKS INTERPRETERS IN HOSPITALS

The Lagos State Government says it will ensure the availability of sign instructors/interpreters at hospitals to assist persons with hearing and speech impairments in getting medical attention.

The Secretary to the State Government (SSG), Mrs Bimbola Salu-Hundeyin, said this on Wednesday in Ikeja, during the SSG's meeting with the Secretaries to the Local Governments and Local Council Development Areas.

Salu-Hundeyin said that the state government would work with the body of local government secretaries, also known as Scribe 57, to ensure inclusivity of the hearing and speech-impaired persons in the government's agenda.

She said that having interpreters was a great way of ensuring that the impaired were not left behind in government's interventions.

According to her, it has been discovered that in some hospitals, a lot of persons with hearing and speech impairments, are unable to communicate effectively with the doctors, and that can lead to a

lot of errors.

"This, maybe, leads to giving wrong medications, things that are not right and all that. They also deserve whatever any able-bodied person deserves. If you are talking of disabilities, not just physical, as you see them, a lot of them have abilities in them, so we should not lose them.

"Having sign instructors is a great way to reach to the people. The THEMES+ agenda of Mr Babajide Sanwo-Olu's second term in office, this administration, talks about inclusivity.

The 'plus' there means inclusivity, first, then we have gender equality and youth development. So if we are going to run an inclusive government, nobody should be left behind. That is what it means.

The fact that people cannot talk or they cannot hear, it does not mean; once they are human beings, they cannot be left behind. This is a determination, and this is a policy of this administration. No one must be left behind," she said.

The SSG said that the society appreciated them and the government

wanted them to also live a healthy life, hence, the need for sign instructors who will be at the hospitals.

"This will also probably become a law later, but we must start from somewhere. So that is what we are doing, and Mr Sanwo-Olu wants this done as well because he caters to everybody in the state," she said.

Salu-Hundeyin also urged Scribe 57 to assist in addressing the issue of drug abuse at the various local governments

"We are doing quite a lot in various communities; we begin to identify those who are on it. We are trying to send them to homes where they will be helped and those that we know are not so bad in it, we tried to dissuade them from it.

"Schools are being taught the disadvantages of drug abuse, we are using education, we are using community people, we are using the CDAs, the CDCs, all hands are on deck. Even the NDLEA, we hold meetings with them and we are insisting that once they get these drugs, we want to see how they are destroyed so that they don't go back into the society," she said.



NIGERIA GOVERNORS' FORUM

ADAMAWA GOVT, WORLD BANK DISBURSE N296M FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION

The Adamawa State Government, in collaboration with Global Partnership for Education (GPE), a World Bank-assisted programme, has disbursed a grant of N296m for the construction of eight public schools in Adamawa.

Each of the selected eight public schools received N37 million for the project.

The cost of 15 other schools selected for rehabilitation under the same programme would be determined upon inspection of the deplorable nature of the benefiting schools.

Speaking during a ceremony to commemorate the disbursement on Friday in Yola, the state Deputy Governor, Prof. Kaletapwa Farauta, underscored the importance of education as a priority area of the administration.

“Education is a priority area for the state government. The construction and rehabilitation of schools would create a conducive learning environment for our children,” she said.

Farauta called on the School-Based

Education is a priority area for the state government. The construction and rehabilitation of schools would create a conducive learning environment for our children

Management Committee (SBMC) responsible for the project delivery in various local government communities, to be accountable and transparent in utilising the funds.

Malam Umar Garba, the Commissioner for Education and Human Capital Development, said the grant was meant to turn around the infrastructure of schools in the state.

Garba said that the selection of beneficiary schools was objective and devoid of bias or political interferences, adding that eight schools would be constructed and 15 renovated.

The commissioner stated that the project was a collective delivery by each community, and meeting the

criteria and benchmark set by the World Bank would determine the next phase of the project.

The National Project Coordinator, Dr Olatunji David, said the project was significant to the agenda of the Federal Ministry of Education in developing a road map in Nigeria’s educational sector.

Represented by the State Project Coordinator, Mr Michael Medugu, David said the GPE was providing support to the three focus states of Oyo, Adamawa and Kastina to address issues of access and learning outcomes.

“We are about to witness transformation in schools’ infrastructure that are under served or hard to reach either for construction or renovation with basic amenities. This is to make learning conducive for learners, increase enrollment and ultimately reduce the menace of out-of-school children,” the project coordinator said.

The state chairman of SBMC, Malam Galadima Isa, who spoke on behalf of the benefiting schools, promised quality and transparent execution of the job at the end of the project.

The Edo State Government has flagged off the distribution of inputs to small-holder farmers in Edo Central Senatorial District ahead of the 2024 farming season.

A total number of 471 farmers across the five local government areas in Edo Central Senatorial District benefited from the input distribution.

The flag-off which took place at Irrua, the administrative headquarters of Esan LGA had farmers from Esan North-East, Esan South-East, Esan West and Igueben LGAs in attendance. Agricultural inputs and Assets were distributed under the Edo FADAMA CARES Result Area Two programme.

Inputs distributed included 9,900 bundles of cassava stem cuttings, 2,115kg of maize seeds, 1,506 litres of pre- and post-emergence herbicides, 801 bags of NPK fertilizers, 141 bags of urea, 25 multipurpose grinding machines and two tricycle carts.

Gov. Godwin Obaseki, while flagging off the exercise, said the state agricultural policies have impacted positively on farmers in Edo.

Represented by the state Commissioner for Agriculture and Food Security, Stephen Idehenre, Obaseki noted that the initiative was aimed at supporting over 12,000 small-holder farmers across the state.

He noted that farmers in the state have been empowered with inputs, essential farm kits, vaccines and poultry feeds to weather the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

“In this programme, our target is to empower 4,179 farmers with farm inputs and services such as crop seeds, cassava cuttings, fertilizers, agrochemicals, fingerlings, and day-old chicks, among others.

“Another 3,441 farmers are to be



2024 FARMING SEASON:

EDO GOVT BEGINS INPUT DISTRIBUTION TO FARMERS

empowered with irrigation facilities to enhance all-year-round farming and rehabilitation of feeder roads for easy access to the farms.

“The programme is also targeting 4,875 farmers to benefit from cassava and rice milling machines, motorized sprayers, cold rooms multipurpose grinding machines, de-feathering machines and tricycles,” Obaseki said.

The governor added that the programme had built over 10 markets and provided water reticulation points, toilets and boreholes in the markets.

According to him, EDO FADAMA CARES programme has implemented over 75 per cent of its targets across the 18 local government areas.

“Today, as a follow-up, the state government is empowering 471 small-holder farmers in Edo Central senatorial district with all these inputs and Assets you are seeing here.

“As a government, we will continue to ensure that we provide all the farm inputs needed to make the 2024 farming season a success,” he added.

In his welcome address, the State

Project Coordinator, Edward Izevbigie, said the inputs and Assets were hybrid varieties that would guarantee high yields for the farmers.

He disclosed that 160 bags of fertilizers, 1,981 bundles of cassava cuttings, 48 bags of Urea, 300 litres of herbicides and 400kg of maize seeds have been allocated to each of the five LGAs.

He also explained that 15 grinding machines and one tricycle were allocated to Igueben local government, Esan West was allocated 10 grinding machines while Esan Central got one tricycle in addition to other inputs distributed.

In his remarks, the chairman of Esan Central local government, Mr John Iyoha, who thanked the governor on behalf of the farmers, promised to set up a monitoring team to ensure that the inputs were well utilised.

According to him, this is the first time the whole of Esan land has witnessed this kind of large-scale input distribution. It has never happened.

“We thank Gov. Godwin Obaseki for fulfilling his promises to Esan people,” he said.



JIGAWA GOVT. PARTNERS WITH JOHN DEERE AND TATA FOR AGRICULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

Following the investment drive tour in the United States (US) by the Jigawa State Governor, Umar Namadi, the state government has forged a significant partnership with two global agricultural leaders, John Deere and Tata International, aimed at transforming agriculture in the state.

The initiative, spearheaded by Governor Namadi, took place during a strategic engagement held in Washington DC between the Jigawa State's team of experts and the leadership representatives of John Deere and Tata International.

Hamisu Mohammed Gumel, the spokesperson to the governor, explained in a statement on Wednesday that the discussions focused on propelling farm mechanisation, fostering youth involvement in agriculture, and uplifting the livelihoods of farmers across the state.

A key outcome of this collaboration is the initiation of a pilot project that includes the procurement of

6 The initiative, took place during a strategic engagement held in Washington DC between the Jigawa State's team of experts and the leadership representatives of John Deere and Tata International.

300 John Deere tractors, slated for delivery to Jigawa State in the near future. This significant investment is poised to revolutionise agricultural practices by bolstering efficiency and productivity among smallholder farmers.

The programme is designed to equip more than 1,200 youths with essential skills in lease and hire business management, heavy-duty equipment operations, and technical maintenance. The central objective is advancing youth participation in agriculture, which holds the key to long-term prosperity and food

security in the state.

Through this initiative, Gov. Namadi's administration seeks to create a sustainable ecosystem that nurtures entrepreneurship and innovation within the agricultural sector, as encapsulated in his 12-point agenda for the development of the state.

Speaking about this transformative venture, the governor emphasised the importance of embracing modern technology and engaging the younger generation to secure a vibrant future for agriculture in the state. He reiterated his administration's dedication to supporting farmers, particularly the youth, by providing them with the tools and knowledge necessary to thrive in this vital sector.

By collaborating with John Deere, a global leader renowned for its cutting-edge agricultural solutions, and its esteemed dealer, Tata International, Jigawa State is poised to embark on a sustainable agricultural revolution that promises to uplift communities and drive inclusive growth across rural landscapes.



GOVERNOR OTU PROVIDES N100 MILLION TO IMPROVE NUTRITION IN CROSS RIVER

Governor Bassey Otu of Cross River says his administration has provided a matching fund of N100 million to scale up food and nutrition interventions in the state.

Mr Otu disclosed this at the launch of the Cross River Strategic Action Plan on Food and Nutrition on Friday in Calabar.

Represented by Peter Odey, his deputy, Mr Otu said his administration would work assiduously with all stakeholders to achieve the action plan.

He said the strategic action plan would involve viable investments in agriculture to achieve food and nutrition security.

The governor said the move would increase food production, availability, accessibility, and affordability in the state.

6 This plan will also seek to reduce malnutrition among school-age children and improve their learning, health, and nutrition status

He said that in implementing the plan, steps would be taken to improve food harvesting, processing, and preservation to reduce post-harvest losses.

"This plan will also seek to reduce malnutrition among school-age children and improve their learning, health, and nutrition status. I am the chairman of the planning commission; we shall vigorously drive

this process of coordination; we are determined," he noted.

Mr Otu commended UNICEF and other partners for their contributions towards the realisation of the action plan.

In his speech, Bong Duke, the vice chairman of the planning commission, said the essence of the plan was to ensure a healthier citizenry.

Mr Duke said the government was using a multi-sectoral approach to fight malnutrition in the state.

On her part, Olusoji Akinleye, officer-in-charge, UNICEF Nigeria, Enugu Field Office, congratulated the government for launching the nutrition policy. She assured that UNICEF would continue to collaborate with the state government to improve the lives of children and women in the state.



CLIMATE CHANGE:

SOKOTO GOVT TO ABSORB OVER 800 NURSES, DOCTORS INTO CIVIL SERVICE

The Sokoto State Government has given its nod to absorb over 800 nurses and medical doctors into the state civil service.

This announcement was made by the State Commissioner for Health, Hajiya Asabe Balarabe, during a gathering recently to mark the 2024 World Health Workers Week.

The event, which took place at the Sokoto Guest Inn, was organised by the Ministry of Health in collaboration with the Health Workforce Management Activity Sokoto.

Commissioner Balarabe clarified that those set to be absorbed include nurses and medical doctors who had been hired and received appointment letters during the tenure of the previous administration.

However, they had not been formally integrated into the civil service until now. The decision to absorb them was made possible by the approval of the current state governor, Dr. Ahmed Aliyu Sokoto.

“The state government through the ministry has approved the payment of monthly allowances to Medical and health students those on three hundred level and above.

“The state governor also directed the ministry to compile a comprehensive list of the graduating health students in the state for onward presentation to him.

“All this effort was inline with the current administration’s desire to have enough manpower in the health sector which is among its nine-point agenda” she added.

During World Health Worker Week, Asabe Balarabe lauded the dedication of health workers in Sokoto State, assuring them of the government’s commitment to their well-being and the advancement of the health sector by providing essential resources.

In his address at the event, retired Permanent Secretary Alhaji Hamza Isah Gwadabawa offered advice to the Sokoto State Government on improving and addressing challenges within the health sector.

He urged philanthropists to follow the example of former governors Alhaji Attahiru Bafarawa and Senator Aliyu Magatakarda Wamakko, as well as Alhaji Musa Bashir, in sponsoring the education of state residents in health-related fields both within and outside the state.

TARABA TO PLANT 2M TREES

Governor Agbu Kefas of Taraba State on Saturday, April 20, 2024, flagged-off a project involving the planting of two million assorted economic tree crops across nine Local Government Areas (LGAs) of the state: Gashaka, Bali, Kurmi, Sardauna, Takum, Ussa, Wukari, Donga and Gassol. The initiative aims to combat climate change and promote economic empowerment among the local communities.

Represented by the Deputy Governor, Alhaji Aminu Alkali, Gov. Kefas urged the people of Taraba State to embrace the initiative, emphasising that the tree crops would not only help mitigate the effects of climate change but will also serve as a significant source of income for the communities.

In her welcome address, the Commissioner of Environment and Climate Change, Hajiya Aishat A. Barde, highlighted the importance of the project and called on all Tarabans to actively participate. She emphasised that this is the first phase of the project and that all other local governments would subsequently be covered.

The Commissioner stressed that the “Green Taraba Project” is a collective

It is essential for all Tarabans to join hands in ensuring the success of this project, as it holds the potential to enhance environmental conservation

responsibility that must be taken seriously by all Tarabans.

She expressed gratitude to Gov. Kefas for his unwavering support to the Green Taraba Project. She also thanked various partners involved in the initiative for their continued support and collaboration.

“The launch of the 2 million rosewood and assorted economic tree crops project signifies a significant step towards biodiversity conservation, environmental sustainability, environmental stewardship and economic empowerment in Taraba State. It showcases the Governor Agbu Kefas led government’s commitment to addressing climate change challenges while creating valuable opportunities for local

communities to improve their livelihoods,” Barde added.

According to her, the initiative underscores the governor’s commitment to regreen Taraba State, adding that stakeholders agreed that planting 2 million economic tree crops is a commendable effort towards building a greener, more economically resilient Taraba.

“It is essential for all Tarabans to join hands in ensuring the success of this project, as it holds the potential to enhance environmental conservation, boost local economies, and create a more sustainable future for generations to come.”

The ceremony also had in attendance the Speaker, Taraba State House of Assembly, Kizito John Bonzena; the Deputy Speaker, Hammadama Borkono; the Senator Representing Taraba South, Sen. David S. Jimkuta; the former Deputy Governor, Alh. Armayau Abubakar; the Secretary to the Government of the State, Chief Barr. Gebon Timothy Kataps; members of the State House of Assembly; members of the State Executive Council; Local Government Chairmen led by the ALGON Chairman, Dr. Aminu Jauro Mafindi; various interest groups; and the general public.

STATES REVIEWING FISCAL SPACE FOR SUSTAINABLE MINIMUM WAGE - NGF



The Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF) says state governments are reviewing their individual fiscal space and the consequential impact of various recommendations, to arrive at an improved minimum wage they can pay sustainably.

The forum stated this in a communique issued by its Chairman, Governor AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq of Kwara State, in Abuja, after its monthly meeting for April.

AbdulRazaq expressed the forum's commitment to working with relevant stakeholders to achieve a better wage for Nigerian workers.

"Forum celebrates with workers across the country for their dedication to service and patience, as we work with the Federal Government, labour, organized private sector and relevant stakeholders in arriving at an implementable national minimum wage.

"While we acknowledge the various initiatives adopted of recent by way of wage awards and partial wage

adjustments, it is imperative to state that the 37-member tripartite committee inaugurated on the National Minimum Wage, is still in consultation and yet to conclude its work.

"As members of the committee, we are reviewing our individual fiscal space as state governments and the consequential impact of various recommendations, to arrive at an improved minimum wage we can pay sustainably.

"We remain committed to the process and promise that better wages will be the invariable outcome of ongoing negotiations," he said.

AbdulRazaq also said that the forum received the World Bank outgoing Country Director, Mr Shubham Chaudhuri, and the incoming Country Director, Mr. Ndiame Diop, to discuss the Bank's vision for transitioning.

He said Chaudhuri commended the forum's non-partisan character and its strategic role in coordinating collective action for developmental change.

The NGF chairman said that Chaudhuri

also applauded commitment of state governments to mutual accountability mechanisms such as performance-based financing interventions by the Bank.

AbdulRazaq said that the forum expressed confidence in the choice of Diop, to lead the collaboration going forward, and look forward to a sustained and deepened relationship.

He said that the forum also discussed the revised National Policy on Justice (2024 -2028) from the just-concluded National Summit on Justice on April 24 to April 25.

The Kwara governor added that the governors agreed to consider the submissions from the summit as might concern their individual states.

These, according to him, include the recommended legal amendments, administrative improvements, and policies to strengthen the justice sector.

He expressed the forum's commitment to considering issues bordering on remuneration of state judicial officers and the infrastructure of the courts.

AbdulRazaq said that governors also received a presentation from the National Human Capital Development (HCD) Programme – Core Working Group Secretariat-led by Ms. Rukaiya El-Rufai and Dr Ahmad Abdulwahab.

The presentation, according to him, highlighted the marginal progress made by states and its contribution to Nigeria's Human Development Index (HDI), especially across health, nutrition, education, and labour force participation.

"Having reviewed the previous programme design and national strategy, a revised governance and implementation roadmap was proposed to scale up impact and ensure sustainability.

"Members pledged to support the effective domestication of proposed revisions to the national health coverage strategy" he said.

AbdulRazaq said that the forum also received delegation of State Action on Business Enabling Reforms (SABER), Federal Ministry of Finance Programme Coordination Unit.

He commiserated with the Governor Siminalayi Fubara of Rivers and his Ogun counterpart, Governor Dapo Abiodun over the petrol tanker explosion and gas explosion that occurred in their states on April 26 and April 27 respectively.

The NGF Chairman called for proper maintenance of trucks, especially those fitted to convey Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) and recommended appropriate training for truck drivers.

On enforcement of regulations, he said forum resolved to engage relevant Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), in order to align the activities of federal regulators with the operations of officials at the sub-national level.

NGF HAILS OYEBANJI OVER TRANSFER OF ELECTRICITY REGULATORY OVERSIGHT TO EKITI



The Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF) has congratulated Ekiti State Governor, Mr. Biodun OyeBanji on the recent transfer of the electricity regulatory oversight by the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) to the Ekiti State Electricity Regulatory Bureau.

The NGF, in a congratulatory letter signed by its Director General, Asishana Okauru, said the transfer was a major achievement and "significant milestone" in the tenure of the Biodun OyeBanji-led administration in Ekiti State.

Hailing Governor OyeBanji for his "dedication, hard work and unwavering commitment to the service of Ekiti State" the NGF said it is proud of the Governor who has undoubtedly made positive and immeasurable impact on the lives of the people of the State.

While commending the cognate Government staff for their untiring commitment to duty, the Forum

reiterated its joy that Governor OyeBanji has penchant for appointing the right people into positions; adding that the Governor's choice of personnel is a testament to his visionary governance.

"On behalf of the Nigeria Governor's Forum secretariat (NGFS), we congratulate you on the signing of the Order of Transfer of Regulatory Oversight of the Electricity Market in Ekiti State. This is a significant milestone in your term as Governor of Ekiti State. It is also a worthy achievement in the life of the new Electricity Act 2023."

"Your dedication, hard work and unwavering commitment to the service of the people of Ekiti State undoubtedly led to this momentous achievement. The positive impact you have had on the lives of the citizens of Ekiti State is immeasurable and something to be proud of. Your tireless efforts have brought about positive changes and advancements that will benefit future generations", Okauru said.

ED RESEARCH AND STRATEGY SON'S WEDDING



R-L President of Dangote Industries Limited, Alhaji Aliko Dangote; 5th right, Bride's Father, HRH Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, with the new couple and some other family members; and 3rd Left, former Kano State Governor, Senator Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso.



R-L; Executive Director, Research and Strategy, NGF, Alhaji Abdulateef Shittu (groom's Father); NGF DG, Mr. A.B Okauru and his wife, Ifueko; Chairman NGF and Governor Kwara State, AbdulRahman AbdulRasaq and his wife Amb. Olufolake Abdulrasaq; the new couple and groom's Mother.



The NGF Secretariat staff at the event



R-L; Chairperson, Nigeria Governors' Spouses Forum (NGSF) and Kwara State First Lady, Amb.Olufolake Abdulrasaq; and the new couple.



L-R; The father of the groom and NGF Executive Director, Research and Strategy, Alhaji Abdulateef Shittu; former Kano State Governor, Senator Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso.



L-R Abia State Governor, Alex Otti; and former Kano State Governor, Senator Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso



Senator Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso; Bride's father, HRH Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, flanked by the new couple; and Olofa of Offa, HRM Oba Mufutau Gbadamosi.



R-L; Chairman, Nigeria Governors' Forum and Kwara State Governor; AbdulRahman AbdulRasaq and Chairperson, Nigeria Governors' Spouses Forum and Kwara State First Lady, Amb. Olufolake Abdulrasaq

FROM THE SECRETARIAT



Bill and Melinda Gates 1. Centre; Senior Programme Officer, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation(BMGF), Katja Schiller Nwator during the courtesy visit of the foundation to the Nigeria Governors' Forum Secretariat.



L-R Director General, Mr. A.B Okauru presenting secretariat to Dr. Sarjana Bhardway, Deputy Director women's health (FP, NNCNH, INNOVATION)



Director General, Nigeria Governors Forum, Mr. A.B Okauru and Minister of communications, Innovations and Digital Economy of Nigeria, Dr. Bosun Tijani during a courtesy visit to The Ministry.



Group photograph by the members of staff of the Nigeria Governors Forum Secretariat and Ministry of communications.



Participants during the Framework for Responsible and Inclusive Land-based Investment in Agriculture (FRILIA) held at the NGF Secretariat, recently.



Task Team Leader, SABER World Bank, Ms. Bertine Kamphuis, addressing participants at the FRILIA Workshop.



FRILIA Expert, World Bank, Mr. Darryl Vhugen, addressing participants at the FRILIA Workshop.



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