

₦6000. £4.3 \$4.5. €4.4

RC: 1270362

Mediaage

Magazine

ISSN

December Edition

Stay Informed



AHMAD ABDULSAMMAD

We Push Boundaries To Sell Comfort -

VINLAND ARCHITECTS AND DESIGNS



LUCY JAMES ABAGI, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, PUBLIC PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT CENTRE (PPDC)

Transparency, A One-Format Solution To Address Nigeria's Challenges - Lucy James Abagi, CEO, Public and Private Development Centre (PPDC)



Health Sector: Stakeholders Converged for Maiden Joint Annual Review (JAR)



I Enjoy Anything Natural And It Led Me To Create Pure Pickers Agromart



My Aspirations For "Dhies Woman" Is To Spark Change and Be A Movement for Women

About Us

Mediaage Magazine is a publication birthed by Mediaage NG News, published by Mediaage Global Technology Nigeria Limited. We prioritise keeping the society informed of events, functions and activities and we cover all sectors of the economy.

We thrive in making stories/news out of functions covered by us. They are published on Mediaage NG Magazine and its website www.mediaageng.com

We excel in boosting the public image of brands (public or private), which in turn improves public awareness of that brand. This also strengthens the brand's culture, an important aspect of having a successful thriving structure.

We are also solid in syndicating stories across trusted, renowned print and online media platforms. Our strength in creative writing is unrivalled. Our publications can also be seen on www.mediaageng.com

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09051337619, 09021706431, 09138724026.



The image shows the cover of Mediaage Magazine. At the top, it lists prices in four currencies: ₦4000, £2.6, \$2.5, and €2.4. On the right, it has the registration number RC: 1270362. The magazine title 'Mediaage Magazine' is prominently displayed in a blue and red box. Below the title, it says 'ISSN', 'Health Exclusive (October)', and 'Stay Informed'. The main headline reads 'Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) Mortality Is Preventable Through Evidence-Based Interventions and Other Measures - Prof. Obiageli Nnodu'. A large photograph of Prof. Nnodu, a woman with glasses wearing a pink shirt, is the central focus. In the bottom right corner, there is a smaller portrait of Prof. Nnodu and a caption: 'Prof. Nnodu is the Special Adviser to the Nigerian Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare, on SCD.'

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Mediaage NG Magazine

ISSN October - November Stay Informed



Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) Mortality is Preventable Through Evidence-Based Interventions and Other Measures
Prof. Obiageli Nnodu



The Judiciary Should Be An Institution Where People Can Comfortably Run To
Yusuf Dantalle - Chairman, IPAC



2024 Gend & Inclusion Summit: Access To WASH More Than Just A Basic Right



Director, BHC PF Advocates For A Coordinated Health Care System



Rape of Female Soldier Prompts Women Affairs Minister to Discuss With Army Chief



The Journey That Helped Save Nigeria's Art for the Nation

Reduction of Disease In Africa Is Attainable – African Institute of Public Health Professionals (AIPHP)

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Mediaage NG Magazine

ISSN June - July Stay Informed

When You Believe And Take Steps, God Confirms His Word - Sen. Diket Plang



Senator Diket Plang
Plateau Central Senatorial District



Barr Rebecca Sako-John



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AIDS Clinical Trials to Improve Health and Well-being



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Hope For Victims Of Sickle Cell Disease - Nigerian Health Minister

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Mediaage NG Magazine

ISSN August - September Stay Informed

Collaboration Best Suited For Affordable Housing Provision In Nigeria - Arc. Atohengbe



Arc. Cecilia Atohengbe
CEO Neighbourhood Turnkey Projects

Addressing The Fundamentals of Hunger and Poverty Key To Launch Of National Hotline For Agriculture – Crop2Cash

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Mediaage NG Magazine

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All First Ladies Must Engage To Actualize The Five Gender Bills - Hon. Foluke Osafile



Honourable Foluke Osafile
Amuwo Odofin 1, Lagos State



NITDA
National Information Technology Development Agency






Mental Health Advocate Urges More Preventive Measures Than Rehabilitation



Publishers Note

Welcome to the December Edition of Mediaage Magazine, our last for the year. It has been an interesting time, covering activities both in the private and public sectors, making stories out of them, getting them published daily on www.mediaageng.com and monthly on Mediaage Magazine.

Our coverage cuts across all sectors of the nation's economy and the production we have had through the year, has been on the legislative, housing, health and political sectors, as our cover pages for various editions of the Magazine.

We want to sincerely appreciate the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Basic Health Care Provision Fund (BHCPF) and related agencies, Federal Ministry of Environment, for the collaboration we have had throughout the year, it has been massive.

Kind appreciation also goes to the Agro-Climatic Resilience in Semi-Arid Landscapes (ACReSAL), National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), Nigerians In Diaspora Commission (NIDCOM), Future Focus Foundation, Rule of Law and Empowerment Initiative, also known as PWAN, Secure D-Future International Initiative (SDF), Mandela Washington Fellowship Alumni Association,

Intra-Party Advisory Council (IPAC), Special Adviser to Nigeria's Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Prof. Obiageli Nnodu, Public and Private Development Centre (PPDC) and others numerous to mention. It's been a good experience. We look forward to more fruitful working relationship next year. The next edition comes up in January, 2025.

This month's edition is packed with stories centring on housing, health, environment, fashion, tourism, and digital rights.

Lack of provision of affordable housing has been a perennial challenge in Nigeria, with majority of the populace lacking in good living conditions. Housing is a basic human need that everyone deserves. In reality, many see it as a challenge to own a home, while others have already given up on the dream of being a homeowner. Having a secure and comfortable home is crucial for a family, as it should be a place of safety and comfort. This comes with careful planning by developers.

Also, utilising the potentials of digitalization transforms a nation's economy and helps a society to grow. Digital transformation creates new opportunities and breeds transparency. Transparency enables countries to embrace data, use them to make better and quicker decisions, ethical decision-making and proactive governance. These and more stories are contained in this edition of Mediaage Magazine. We hope you have a pleasurable reading.



Olaedo Nelson

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The Big Picture

"What you constantly fix your eyes on, gradually becomes your reality. Be careful of your kind of environment".



Kingsley U.N. Chikwendu

We Push Boundaries To Sell Comfort - Vinland Architects and Designs



Architects are the best professionals to design and build homes. They have the training, experience, and vision to create a well-designed home. They are licensed, having undergone extensive education. They consider many factors when building a home. As architects, they plan a better project that will fit into a budget. Architects develop a proposed building design that will not only fit into a request but, satisfy building codes and meet structural standards. As architects come to learn about the different aspects of project development in the course of their education and throughout their career in the industry, with project management experience, many know what it takes to design and construct a building. They understand the process of site and project analysis and construction techniques. In this interview with Ahmad Abdulsammad, we spoke at length on how and why he choose to build a career in housing development, and what had been his experiences so far. Excerpts:

Can you introduce yourself please?

My name is Abdulsammad Ahmad, the CEO, Vinland Architects and Designs. We are a young

real estate company. We began two years ago and commenced our first project earlier this year. Presently, we are working on a project in Katampe, it's called Arsgard, housing 64 units, filled with varieties of buildings - two bedrooms, four bedrooms. We have four bedroom terraces, five bedroom semi detached and five bedroom detached units. I schooled in Eastern Mediterranean University, Cyprus, where I studied Architecture. I also did my Masters there in Architecture.

What motivated you to venture into real estate business?

When I was in the university, I had the ambition to achieve great things, to contribute and if possible, change something in Nigeria. While serving during my National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) with Multi Systems Consultants, an architectural firm, I became privy to general business and architecture. I began seeing lots of real estate companies. We tried to facilitate a deal for a real estate company and a land owner. And, in the midst of that, we became quite familiar with the business. The deal actually fell through but, I had that thought of going into the business. I had gotten a taste of it and it's beyond just building houses and selling them.

I decided to open a company and get people on board. I reached out to three friends. One of them saw my idea as a crazy and ambitious one, and asked if I can be able to achieve them.

We began looking for land to form an agreement with the owner and start building. We got one through a family member but, it didn't work out. However, we were getting more familiar with the business and ways of doing it, as time progressed. We kept trying, got another land, did the necessary processes and sent it for approval. These continued until it got to a point we were left with no land.

I kept visiting different plots. If I say I've gone to thirty plots, that will be an understatement.

When the then FCT Minister made a pronouncement that whoever has land in the FCT and hasn't put up a building, will be revoked. As at then, we had someone that was helping us get a land. He knows the owner of the land that we are on now. When he was called by the owner that he needs someone that can develop on his land, the first name that came from him was mine and that was how God's Grace shone for us. It's a huge land, about 1.9 hectares (19sqm) which is more than anything that we thought of, especially for us as a new business.

When we came to the land, we saw it was flat and in an excellent location. Without thinking twice, we agreed and believed that whatever we put our hands on, we will achieve.

I use to ask myself, what makes great people different from the average? I try to study them, both those I meet in person and the famous. When they've set out their minds to do something, they are stubborn with it, persistent and consistent. I also believe that God blesses the works of our hands. I told you for about two years, we were in search for a land.

And, during this period, we tried multiple businesses to keep us moving. My family even were showing concern that I have nothing doing and should get me a job but, I told them I don't want. I really believed we could do it and a lot of real estate companies are not doing well. Most of them give substandard homes, while trying to cut costs. Some can't even finish their projects. Since I entered, I understood why they fall into that category because, once you start seeing large sums of money, you start thinking of taking a small chunk of it and your lifestyle begins to change. The problem here is that, it's the initial investment that's been touched, not a profit. This is what I think starts making people go for cheaper materials.

In all honesty, it has been quite challenging starting at this period. When we first got this plot, prices of materials are not the same today

as they were. A bag of cement as at then was ₦3,500 but, when our approval came out, it had gone upwards to ₦8,000. It became a time when we had to review our prices, bearing in mind the volatility of the Naira . We put certain measures in place to protect ourselves from inflation and the devaluation of the Naira.



What we aimed was not to start building and fall half way. When we began fixing our prices, in consideration of the hike in prices of items, some persons complained of the high price but, we had to make them understand the reason. We have belief in God that since we've gotten this place, we will surely wax strong in this business. We kept seeing signs of His Hands on our work. I think it's because of our sincerity and I pray that we maintain it throughout our lives. I also understand that life happens to people. A lot of persons have faced not too pleasant situations. It could be anything that makes people to do certain things but, for us, we pray that we maintain this integrity and zeal of ours. We really hope that we can push the boundaries and improve quality of life.

We want a situation for our clients where in the next 30 years, they are still enjoying peace and comfort in our houses. We hope to push the boundaries and change the game. Our motto is "We sell comfort".

With the current infrastructure development going on here, like the newly construction of a bridge connecting Gishiri and Maitama, our clients (the ones that have began subscribing are already excited with this development. Someone's mood is already getting elated.

Initially when we started, there was really not many roads but, some persons still had that

trust in us. The few ones that we met were developed by developers that were here before us.

With these new infrastructure development coming here, has it affected your prices?

Of course, it's natural. Considering how we started and the development that came in, naturally, the prices have gone up.

Can you still tell us more about your business? That's basically why we are here. What impacts do you aim to make?

Like I said earlier, our aim is to improve housing. For example, in our terrace units, even for the designs...I will give you an example, when you see some terrace houses, they look a bit congested but, with us, ours is not as congested as others. That's the reason you will see that our balconies are by the side of the next house, giving that little vacuum and spaces.



People see that our approach in this regard is different. They see that the terraces are not as congested as others. Also, there is a space at the back and a lot of outdoor activities we put in mind as regards this. We create the terraces in such a way that spaces are available and useful. In all these things, we give six metres, that's two times what other developers give. We also make sure.

We have a gym, recreational spaces to keep the estate more alive. I don't see that in a lot of estates that I've gone to. It's something like if you are indoors, you don't even need to go out.

You can stay within the estate and still get what you want and be fine. People that love jogging and doing fitness. You jog around the estate. These are some of the things we put into consideration.

Our terraces are three floors, the ground, first and second floors. I speak with people living in terraces and one said he gets tired climbing the staircase and sometimes, the master bedroom is at the top most floor. It is actually very tiring and we will be putting this into consideration in our next project and make everything just one floor.

The reason for this is generally, there's no much space in Abuja central area and people tend to maximise space is because they expect some certain level of returns. Using someone's land, you have to give him back more than the value of that land. Someone once criticised us for leaving more spaces in our estate. I even feel it's congested. To others, they see real estate as a business but, we are seeing it as a means of providing comfort.

Maybe, it's because a lot of developers are not actually architects. They may know how to source for funds but, we architects, we have a bit of an advantage to consider people's comfort and their well-being. Any business that you do, if you are attending to people or selling products to them, your aim is to meet their satisfaction. If they are not satisfied, then, what's the aim?

Looking at most successful businesses today, putting the satisfaction of customers first made them to be successful as they are today. For example, somebody like the late Steve Jobs, he was so intentional with his decisions on Apple products with new innovations. But, since his death, what we keep seeing from their products are almost repetitions and same patterns, with little additions of features. But, most persons don't know because, he already established that trust. They just know it's an apple product.

Once you put your customer at the centre and established that trust, your product sales will increase.

Where do you project your business to be in the next ten years?

We are looking forward to be among the top ten real estate companies in Abuja. We would love to have at least seven projects in ten years time, fully completed. So, we intend to finish this present project by 2026 and we are quite on track as regards that. The project is a huge one and we are trying to be strategic as to when we will start the next one. That's one problem we solved in the first phase, we ended up being too stretched. Okay, we have delivered the first project and it's successful and we have people that are coming to say come and develop my land. From finishing one project to carrying out five projects, you start transferring funds from this project to the next one, from that site to the next one.

Naturally, it becomes packed, except you have substantial finances. You start meeting people's satisfaction. That's when others start thinking how do they cut corners to meet their targets. That's what ends up compromising the integrity of the work, even. So, we plan to grow organically, not ostentatiously. That's what I think a lot of real estate companies don't realise.

There is a certain level of growth that's healthy or detrimental. We try to be strategic and at the same time, we intend to make a very huge impact. We want to do bigger projects, larger than this one. I would even say in the next five years, we will be working on three, that's the projection. We would love to also, not only concentrate on residential but, commercial projects - whether it's plazas or markets, whatever they may be. That's just to show our level of diversified portfolios.

We also aim to try some government projects, if possible, try to replicate this level of comfort so

that when we reach some certain levels, we be referred as a standard where people will be asking other real estate companies "are your houses Vinland standard"? That's the aim.

I realise that some customers don't know what they are missing. They've been sold substandard products and it's hard for them to identify something that is good. Once you produce that thing that is good and introduce to your customers, they know better. When they look at every other houses and make comparisons with us, they will acknowledge that "those boys really tried". That's the kind of thought-process we want to provoke and you will see them coming back to us. That could be when we've already sold the house or hiked up the price (laughs). That's the kind of level of demand and integrity we want to create.

I recall one of our clients, as soon as development began coming to this area, he called us saying "please, don't tell me the price has a gone up (laughs). Immediately, he said he wants to make payment. He would have gotten it a lot cheaper. I think it's also the nature of the business. There's another of our client, actually he's a personal friend. He was actually our first client. He began making payments when a bag of cement was ₦3,500. Imagine what the sum would be then! He has the cheapest price and that's the reward for believing in us. He paid us even when we've not even gotten an approval yet. He just believed that yes, we grew up together and I want to support you in this business. That's the actual truth, you need the support of friends and families.

Another funny thing is, a lot of persons close to you don't actually believe you can achieve this. In this regard, I know of few, they won't say it to your face but will be busy doubting if we can actually do this. Some were even saying "instead of him to go do something else, he thinks he can do this. But, now ,they are already seeing it come to fruition. So, sometimes, when you believe in something, you are the only person that knows

what you actually believe in. Also, there are times you might end up questioning your own belief because of them. You just have to be resilient and remain steadfast if you truly believe in yourself.

Where did you get this resilient spirit from?

It's from my outlook on life. I put God first in everything I do. I believe that whatever you ask God and you are in the right relationship with Him, He will do it. And, sometimes, when things start going sour, I already know that it's God testing me. There's always light at the end of the tunnel and that's the actual truth. In hardship, God comes in. When things are going not as expected, I'm a bit excited because, I know there's a reward in the end. You can always learn resilience from some persons who never gave up.

We had people that promised to invest with us but, they never did and when things began going good, they started showing interest. But, then, the conditions from us have already changed because the tide has changed, the tables have turned.

When I left the UK for Cyprus where I got admitted to the Eastern Mediterranean University, to study Architecture, I call it my biggest blessing. It was when I got there that I met people from Kano whose conversations were mostly business based, not fashion like we use to. These persons are in same school with me. But, when they get their money, they send it home to improve their businesses like fish pond and other poultry that were bringing them money, while I was hoping on my parents to send me money. Instantly, I knew something is up, I admired them. One interesting thing about them is, once they get back home, they continue immediately with their businesses and once they get back to school, it's purely academics.

So, when I came back, one of the first places I went to was Kano, I tried to get into leather

business - leathers that are used in producing designer bags and shoes for thousand of dollars come from Nigeria. I had to go see for myself. But, could you believe when i got there, the best quality leather is to get the ones have no holes but, it's yet rare to get them. They are in grades A, B and C. People coming from outsider the country only take the grades A and B. Even people working in the factory don't see the grades A and B because, as soon as they drop, they are getting straight to the plane to be flown out to Europe. I saw it made a whole lot of sense. So, I tried entering the business and that was when I realised that there's more to it than meets the eye.

After that, I began producing shoes with one of my friends who was into fashion. Recall I studied in Italy for a Masters course in Furniture Design. Though, it was interrupted by COVID, it was deferred for another year which I completed. This gave me another level of exposure and brought me to a new level of design. It made me see myself more as a designer. It means that whatever I intend doing, I can make the design myself, that's the first thought I got. Whether it has anything to do with building or furniture, I just believed that I can be able to design. As long as I can think it, I can design. So, all these are the ingredients that brought me to where I am now.

My level of resilience were borne out of these experiences I've had. Despite being afforded a good standard of living, I still had some tough experiences in life. Probably, they could be self inflicted but, they made me strong. When you go through life difficult moments, they are what allow you to mature. When you come out from them, you are most likely be a better person.

My sojourn in Cyprus gave me a different view of life, made me better. When I went there, I met people from different economic backgrounds. There were some students that only had their first semester fees paid for and were asked to start fending for themselves. I became more

aware of life and how I should value it. So, meeting those guys from Kano began making more sense for me. I also realised that I was more daring in taking risks than them.

So, when I came back to Nigeria after schooling, I met some disgruntled architects, while thinking of what to do. I knew I could get more from what I was seeing. A lot of people don't know that there are lots of opportunities to capitalise on. I just believe that anything I want to do, I can set the right mechanisms to get it done. You need people to be successful, you can't do things alone.

One of the things I also identified is, it's not all about academic excellence. One interesting thing about successful people you meet for help is, they keep you in mind. Some of them, a year later, they will call and ask how is your project going on? Some of them could be angry or upset they couldn't get that help immediately, forgetting that they've established contact already. There are some persons that will just be observing or evaluating your capabilities.

We can't finish this session without talking about the Nigerian government. How can they come in to provide affordable housing for the people, especially the low income families?

I think first of all, we need to look at what makes housing costly, from cement usage to the finishing materials when these houses are completed. Also, we have components that are imported. Okay, maybe, we leave the imported ones and improve on the ones we produce here. For example, cement production. If there's a way the government can make it easier for more persons to produce cement, it will bring down the price.

Also, iron is a gold in building. Naturally, if building materials can be made a lot cheaper, we have more affordable housing. Though, we still have some affordable houses that are substandard. There are some approaches I've

seen in some West African countries where they use burnt bricks to bring down the cost of housing. This is cheaper than cement. Sometimes, this depends on the location and sand that is in that area. So, there are some places that have more of those sands and using them to mould the bricks, makes houses cheaper there. This ends up being geographical.

However, one thing with housing is, you have to respond to the client. It's not like to copy and paste. For example, a place in Nigeria's South South like Akwa Ibom State where you have to take more measures in building houses, considering the frequency of rainfall there, comparing it to a place like Katsina or Sub-Saharan Africa that doesn't rain as much. Katsina can be dusty or sandy, due to the environment. Like when fixing doors on a building in such area like Katsina, it has to be in a way that it's pushed outside, not inside, because of dust. The walls don't need to be very thick, since it hardly rains there. In this regard, you could say the government should provide incentives for areas in the Northwest, Northeast, so that housing can be afforded.

The problem is, thinking everything must be uniformed. Transportation is costly. Moving building materials from one location to another is costly and it affects the prices of houses. These are some of the things I feel the government need to look into for provision of affordable homes. Also, we need the research and development body to commit to ensure building integrity.

16 Days Activism: Women Affairs Ministry Leads Fight Against Gender Based Violence



Minister of Women Affairs has urged relevant authorities to work assiduously to reinvigorate stakeholders mobilisation, awareness creation and provision of support services to victims of Gender Based Violence (GBV).

According to the Head, Information and Public Relations of the Ministry, Grace Njoku, this is in preparation for the upcoming 16 Days of activism against issues of GBV.

Hajiya Imaan Sulaiman-Ibrahim highlighted the need to ensure sustainability of the issues raised at the 2nd planning meeting held Monday, at the Ministry's Headquarters in Abuja, to facilitate robust arrangements that will drive significant impact in addressing GBV issues in the country.

Represented by the Director, Women Development Department of the Ministry, Friya Bulus, the Minister said the incidences of reported cases gender based violence soared to frightening levels in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria, and noted that this led to the Federal Executive Council passing a resolution that called for urgent measures against the menace, as well as a declaration of the State of Emergency against GBV in the country by the 36 State Governors.

"Gender-Based Violence (GBV) remains a hydra-headed monster affecting millions of women, children and marginalised communities in Nigeria", she said.

She called on government at all levels, civil society organizations and the private sector to accelerate progress towards ending violence against women and girls.

Activities lined up for the commemoration of the celebration themed: 'Towards Beijing +30: UNITE to End Violence Against Women and Girls', among others, include, Town Hall Meeting with Women Groups, GBV Awareness rallies in 6 geopolitical zones in collaboration with the Office of the First Lady, Flag off of Nationwide campaigns with the release of Helium Balloons as well as interdenominational prayers for Muslims and Christians (in all mosques and churches nationwide).

It began from November 25th and will last till December 11th, 2024.

The 2024 observance provides the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs as the National Mechanism for the advancement of women in Nigeria, under the leadership of Hon. Imaan Suleiman-Ibrahim to consolidate on the gains made in the past through the efforts of the Federal Government, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and international partners in addressing GBV.

The planning meeting brought together participants from the public and private sector.

Nigeria Promises Free Cesarean Section for "Vulnerable" Women"



The Nigerian government, through the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare has launched a plan that aims to provide free cesarean sections for women across the country.

The Coordinating Minister, Prof. Muhammad Ali Pate said the drive is with the objective of reducing maternal and newborn mortality in Nigeria.

According to him, maternal mortality remains “unacceptably high”, with over fifty percent of maternal deaths recorded in 172 local government areas in the country.

“A pivotal feature of this initiative is the provision of free cesarean sections for poor and vulnerable women who meet eligibility criteria, covering services provided through both public and private facilities empaneled by the National Health Insurance Authority (NHIA), Prof Pate stated in Abuja, at the launch of the Joint Annual Review, organised by the Ministry.

“By removing financial barriers to this life-saving procedure, we ensure that no woman in need is denied critical care due to cost”, he said.

The initiative tagged Maternal Mortality Reduction Innovation (MMRI) is a quick response to Nigeria’s maternal and new born health challenges.

“Through demand generation, expanded primary and emergency care, and the removal of financial barriers, we are advancing a healthcare system that is truly accessible, affordable, and effective for all Nigerians.



Nigeria's Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Prof Muhammad Ali Pate speaking at the maiden Joint Annual Review.

“Together, we are building a future where no mother or child is left behind in accessing the quality, affordable care they deserve”, Mr. Pate stated.

NDIS 2024: Tinubu Describes Nigerians in Diaspora As Assets for Economic Transformation



President Bola Tinubu has pledged his administration’s support for Nigerians in diaspora, describing them as assets that can play active roles in stimulating the country’s economic transformation.

He said his administration’s reformatory policies are pivotal for Diaspora-driven investments crucial for the country’s growth.

He urged entrepreneurs to make the most of the reforms and create employment opportunities.

“The Diaspora plays a critical role in any nation’s development. You are an indispensable asset to our great nation”, President Tinubu, represented

by the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Sen. George Akume said at the 7th Nigerians in Diaspora Investment Summit, in Abuja, on Tuesday 05th November, 2024.

“You are not only ambassadors of Nigeria but torch-bearers of excellence and innovation.

“Let me assure you that Nigeria is open for business; we are committed to providing the support and enabling environment you need to invest with confidence.

“Together, let us forge partnerships that will drive progress and prosperity for our nation”, Mr. Tinubu said.

While revealing that his government is ready to make provisions for ideas to be turned into reality, he called on the Diasporas to leverage their global expertise and resources to bridge Nigeria’s development gaps.

He assured participants that the sectors being highlighted at the Summit: Finance, ICT, Agribusiness, Healthcare, Real Estate, Manufacturing, or Energy, are already experiencing ongoing reforms designed to attract investments.

“There are vast investment opportunities waiting to be tapped, and with our focused approach to sectoral reforms, we can assure immense returns for those willing to invest and contribute to our nation’s growth”, he stated.

The Director General, Directorate of Technical Cooperation in Africa, DTCA, Ambassador Rabi Dagari said the Diasporas are focal to fostering economic resilience that can drive Nigeria forward.

“Our nation stands at a pivotal juncture, where both stability and sustainable growth are imperative and paramount, he posited.

“The Nigerian Diaspora, one of the country’s greatest assets, plays a central role in shaping

this future. As a reservoir of talent, resources, and innovation, the Nigeria Diaspora are key to fostering economic resilience and driving Nigeria toward long term prosperity”, he added.

The Chairman, NiDCOM, commended the Diaspora investors who have consistently chosen to invest in the businesses of local entrepreneurs and in the prosperity of our nation.

“This commitment does not only highlight the deep spirit of patriotism that exists among our Diaspora community but, a testimony that the Diaspora are an indispensable ally in the quest for national development”, Abike Dabiri Erewa stated.

Experts Urge African Governments to Prioritise Technology for Educational Growth



Education experts on Tuesday 05th November, 2024, called on African governments to prioritise the adoption of technology in their respective country’s educational system.

Brainstorming in the Nigerian capital, Abuja, during the 7th African Edu-Tech Conference, where they engaged in panelist sessions to map out effective ways to make the education system better and deliver results.

The event organised by Edefirst Nigeria, with support from the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), Nigerian – British Chamber of Commerce (NBCC) and Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) was a three-day function that aimed at enhancing teaching and

learning, improved accessibility and preparedness of the continent's future workforce for the demands of the digital age.

It seeks to explore cutting-edge EdTech solutions through engagement in meaningful discussions, and benefit from the diverse experiences of participants. Some of the stakeholders at the conference concurred that by embracing digital solutions, the African continent can enhance quality in education and accessibility, foster economic growth and competitiveness, develop a skilled and adaptable workforce, bridge the digital divide, as well as secure a brighter future for its citizens.

Co-host and Executive Secretary of UBEC, Dr. Hamid Bobboyi, underscored the relevance of emerging technologies in advancing knowledge and educational achievement especially at the basic school level.

"Our strong desire to host the Conference is borne out of the realization that the only sure way to transform basic education in Nigeria and align with the needs of the century we are living in, is to pervasively use the newly emerging education technologies that this Conference is spearheading, he said.

He added that the Commission keyed into the conference because it was convinced that the frontiers of digital development in Nigeria can be pushed further and faster through public-private partnership.

The British High Commissioner to Nigeria, represented by the Senior Education Adviser, British High Commission, Ian Attfield, stressed the need to build an effective African education technology ecosystem. He noted that EdTech is dynamic, contextual and does not exist in a vacuum, rather it "involves more than hardware and connectivity".

The Executive Director, Centre for National Distance Learning and Open Schooling

(CENDLOS), Nana Gyamfi Adwabour, lauded Nigeria for infusing digital skills into its new curriculum for basic schools, even as he charged other African countries to borrow a leaf from the country.

Adwabour emphasised the need for the continent to transit from theory-based education system to practicals. "It (the new curriculum) is good, he said.

"To develop in any African country, Technical Vocational Educational Training (TVET) has to be improved. That is how employability can come. The kids should be creators to employ themselves.

"Other African countries should emulate that. Before you can do that, your curriculum has to be supported. It has to be standard based. So I applaud Nigeria for doing that.

"At first, most African countries were using objective based. That is more teachers dominant, making kids very docile. In Ghana, we have a standard based curriculum which makes kids explore to do more project-based learning and experimentation.

"We have infused into them that if you fail, it is part of the process", he stated.

The Manager, Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), Nigeria office, David Nkwa, said African countries can upscale technology in schools by ensuring its acceptance and adoption among teachers, parents and community leaders through inclusive deployment processes.

According to him, successful adoption can be achieved by engaging stakeholders throughout the process, enabling seamless scaling-up of technology to neighbouring communities and states.

Salako Clamours for End to Industrial Actions



Nigeria's Minister of State for Health and Social Welfare, has called for a mechanism that will ensure industrial peace and harmony amongst the various union bodies in the country's health sector.

In a statement issued on Friday 15th November, 2024, by the Deputy Director, Information & PR of the Ministry, Alaba Balogun, the Honourable Minister of State noted that the importance of achieving and sustaining this is critical to the attainment of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's agenda for improving health care services in Nigeria.

Dr. Iziaq Adekunle Salako, while receiving members of the National Tertiary Health Institutions Standard Committee (NTHISC) on a courtesy visit, said the mechanism will put an end to industrial actions in a crucial sector as health.

"It's key priority to rebuilding public confidence in health workers and the government", he said.

He also called on members of the NTHISC, to initiate strategies in this direction to diffuse tension amongst unions in the sector.

Speaking on financial constraints affecting the activities of the committee, he admonished members on financial independence for its sustainability. The Federal Government, he added, will assist the committee on initiating a

right path.

Earlier, the Chairman of the Committee, Prof. Philip O. Abiodun, said that a major challenge of the committee is funding and, unequipped office accommodation; emphasizing, Ministry's intervention in addressing these constraints is very critical and, essential to achieving its mandate.

The National Tertiary Health Institutions Standard Committee which comprise seasoned health professionals was inaugurated last year November.

It has a mandate to make relevant investigations and recommendations to the federal and state governments on tertiary health care services in the national interest; advise the federal government on the financial needs, both recurrent and capital of tertiary health services and, in particular investigate and study the financial needs for training, research and services.

Environment Minister Hands Over Vehicles to National Park Service, Says ACREsAL Key to Building Community Resilience



Nigeria's Minister of Environment on Friday 18th October, 2024, handed over ranger vehicles to the National Park Service, while describing the 'tremendous strides' made by the Agro-Climatic Resilience in Semi-Arid Landscapes (ACReSAL) as key to building community resilience and increasing sustainable landscape management

practices.

He said this aligns perfectly with the ministry's vision for environmental sustainability and biodiversity conservation.

Balarabe Abbas Lawal revealed this at the Handover Ceremony in the Nigerian capital, Abuja.

The deployment of the vehicles is aimed at improving significantly the NPS's effectiveness in combating dangerous trend of poaching and preservation of the wildlife.

The Minister said the vehicles will "improve patrol capacities and real-time monitoring".

"It will boost surveillance and rapid response to potential threats to our National Parks located in 11 states", Mr. Lawal said.



He said the handover of the vehicles to the NPS is a proof of President Bola Tinubu's commitment to enhancing the capacity of the NPS in providing transportation for the Park Ranger Guards, National Park Personnel, Tourists to the Parks, and Researchers.

He further noted the ACREsAL project under his leadership as Chairman of the Federal Steering Committee, has procured and distributed ICT equipment to various ministries, departments, and agencies at both federal and state levels, significantly improving operational efficiency and effectiveness.

"Additionally, office buildings and conference halls of some MDAs are being renovated,

providing a more conducive environment for implementing environmental policies, plans, and programs for sustainability of the (ACReSAL) Project", the Minister enumerated.

He said a total of 1,003,000 persons have benefited from the project since commencement in 2022, with 49% being female. The project has also promoted peace-building and conflict resolution efforts through the engagement of Search for Common Ground.

He commended the ACREsAL Project team and the World Bank for their tireless efforts to the NPS, urging that they utilize the resources at their disposal efficiently and ensure that they serve as catalysts for strengthened conservation and sustainable development for the good of Nigerians.

The National Project Coordinator of the ACREsAL Project, Abdulhamid Umar said the eleven vehicles will service each of the national parks across the country.

He said with the acquisition of the vehicles, the days of kidnappers hiding in forests are over.

Mr. Umar revealed that the ACREsAL Project has intervened in the construction of seven guard posts in selected National Parks and "this can only be achieved under the dynamic leadership of the Minister".

The Conservator-General (CG) of the NPS, Ibrahim Musa Goni in his remarks, said one of the National Park Service's visions is to promote ecosystem restoration and vegetation recovery.

He said the NPS will ensure that every degraded area in all national parks are recovered.

Goni said the NPS has received 20 KVA solar project which powers its headquarters, ICT equipment, complimenting the already existing ones from ACREsAL.

He said five ranger posts are under construction

in seven national parks (four old national parks and three new national parks).

ACReSAL is a World Bank-financed project designed to tackle the pressing issues of land degradation and climate change in 19 states of northern Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

How 'Desperate' Mum's Search for Eczema Cure Led to Award-Winning Business



Joshua Lloyd was born with severe eczema that he would scratch, his mother Shalom said

"When Shalom Lloyd's twins Joshua and Amara were born in March 2014, her son had severe eczema that left him bleeding and looking like he had snakeskin.

Having trained as a pharmacist, the British-Nigerian, who said she was a "scientist thorough and through", could not justify giving him steroids so decided to look for an alternative, natural solution.

"I was a desperate mum who'd just been given this precious gift and was trying to find a way to take my son's pain away – it's really that simple," she said.

She left her high paying job, remortgaged her home in Milton Keynes and launched a business. Six years later, her skincare company won a national award for sustainability.

Mrs Lloyd said the business began on her kitchen table. Drawing on her science background, she used raw shea butter and added other ingredients to create her own recipe. Within three days she had her "eureka formulation".

How 'Desperate' Mum's Search for Eczema Cure Led to Award-Winning Business MediaageNG "When Shalom Lloyd's twins Joshua and Amara were born in March 2014, her son had severe eczema that left him bleeding and looking like he had snakeskin.

Shalom Lloyd collected her MBE for services to international trade and to women in business, at Windsor Castle in May

"Josh's skin started to drastically change and improve and eventually became what it should have been from birth," she said.

She then decided to remortgage her home to start Naturally Tiwa Skincare.

The company was registered in June 2016, started trading in March 2018 and is now based in Stony Stratford.

It grew to employ about 70 women at two shea processing plants in Nigeria."It's not philanthropy, it's not aid, it's trade," the 51-year-old said.

"Yes, I am empowering women but they're working for their living."After processing, the raw material was sent to the UK where it was manufactured, tested and packaged. It was then stored in a Milton Keynes warehouse.

Once an online order was approved, members of MK Snap – a charity that helps adults with learning difficulties to thrive – were paid to pick, pack and ship the produce.

"Starting my business was a fluke – I'd love to say it was all part of my master plan, but I had an incredible job in the pharma industry, I had a six figure salary, I had my children in private school, holidays every year, and I left it," Mrs Lloyd told the BBC.

"I gave that up because I believe in what I'm doing.

"Having a business that is founded by women,

made by women, led by women, but used by all is a special thing.

“Sometimes people say to me – ‘is it difficult being a black female business owner?’

“I went to university in Ukraine in the 80s, you could count the black people with half your finger, I don’t care. I just want to go out there and do what I need to do – do the right thing – make the world a better place and make money doing it – simple.”She added:

“We have found our niche and we’re staying in our niche and that is for people with skin conditions or cancer patients who are going through chemotherapy, radiotherapy or menopausal women, we’re positioning ourselves as a solutions driven organization.

“We’re small but mighty.”

Mrs Lloyd’s company won the sustainable business category at the Enterprise Vision Awards (EVAs).

The judges said its “dedication to sustainability is unwavering”.Coral Horn, the founder of the EVAs, said the winners “showcased remarkable passion, dedication, and a clear vision for a more sustainable future”.

The BBC.

WATERING THE SEEDS OF GROWTH: ACReSAL Support for Dry Season Farming in Kogi



We had little food and a lot of challenges

because of poverty – and absolutely no knowledge of dry season farming.”

Yakubu Suleiman was one of many farmers in Ankpa and Kabba Bunu Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Kogi State who had rivers flowing near their land but no idea of how to irrigate.

Dependent on just one rainfed crop a year, he was unable to ensure even two meals a day for his family, leaving them unemployed, hungry and poor for most of the year. Unable to pay school fees, children of school-going age were out of school, working menial jobs or hawking goods to earn money for the family.

ACReSAL

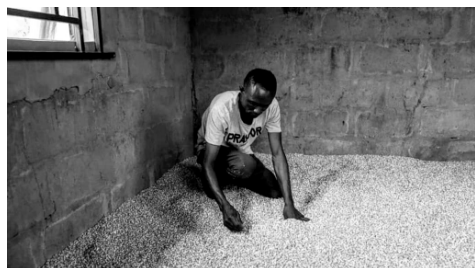
In December 2023, the Kogi State Project Management Unit (SPMU) of the World Bank-supported Agro-Climatic Resilience in Semi-Arid Landscapes (ACReSAL) project of the Government of Nigeria stepped in.

Aware of the plight of these communities, the SPMU held a stakeholders’ meeting and identified 150 farmers (of which 17 were women) from the four communities of Mabolo, Offejiji and Ogaji in Ankpa LGA and Okeola/Otu in Kabba Bunu LGA, who showed interest in learning how to do irrigated farming during the dry season.

Community Interest Groups (CIGs) were formed, with 17 members in Mabolo, Offejiji, and Ogaji, in Ankpa LGA, and 50 members in Kabba Bunu. A total of 5.3 ha was obtained by the CIG groups in Ankpa LGA, and 4.25 ha by those in Kabba LGA. These smallholder farmers planted only hybrid maize on their plots, which averaged around 0.1 hectares in Ankpa and 0.085 ha in Kabba Bunu.

ACReSAL helped in the land preparation, engaged a consultant to guide them through their first dry season of farming, organized a training on irrigated and climate-smart maize cultivation, and provided them with farm inputs which included seedlings, knapsack sprayers,

organic fertilizers, pesticides, safety boots and gloves.



The Impact

“We used to produce two 100 kg bags of maize per hectare; but this time we produced ten bags!” Mr. Obasaju of the Kabba Bunu CIG captured the essence of the impact on farmers’ yields after the harvest in April 2024. After setting aside the seeds needed for replanting, the 150 farmers had enough maize for their families to eat, and even to sell in the local market.

Apart from farmers, around 1400 household members, workers and transporters (850 women and 550 men) also benefited indirectly from the intervention. Even after just one season, residents in all four communities can glimpse a better future with multiple harvests, food around the year, higher incomes, more jobs, better livelihoods, and less hunger and poverty.

Such job and food security, enhanced awareness, knowledge and capacities, and greater earning potential will of course enhance their resilience against future climate change, but a lot more needs to be done to achieve such a vision. Production needs to increase, which means greater effort, while even sustaining these gains will mean more attention to basics. What next?

The local communities have realized the value of the agricultural inputs that the project has provided for free. The CIGs have arranged to safeguard their new farm implements and

pumping machine and reserved maize seeds from their harvest for next season’s sowing. CIG members are contributing a token 300-500 Naira every week to pay for the operation and maintenance (O&M) of the irrigation channels, pump, sprayers and other equipment, in case any future repairs.

Their future plans include tractors, water pumps, drip irrigation, transportation tricycles, and storage silos. Apart from continued sensitization and capacity building, the ACRoSAL SPMU in Kogi realizes that sustaining and expanding benefits requires them to procure additional water for dry-season irrigation – either from new borewells or from external sources.

Thus, there are plans to tap the rainwater channeled from the under-construction gully erosion control site at Etahi to the Aku-Obanyi river in the lower catchment. This will provide enough irrigation for dry season farming for at least some of these communities.

If successful, the model can be extended to other parts of Kogi state with water bodies that can support irrigation to nearby fields for dry-season agriculture.

SUPPORTING A HUNDRED WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE: Niger State ACRoSAL Activity in Nigeria



Women in twenty-five communities spread

across nine Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Niger State in Nigeria cultivated and sold agricultural produce but, had been chronically vulnerable economically (These 25 communities of Beji, Chibo, Dagodnagbe, Dan Zaria, Dankuwagi, Doko, Edozhigi, Emiwo, Etsutsagi, Kakakpangi, Kasakogi, Kodo, Kontagora, Kpatsuwa, Lanle, Magandu, Makusidi, Masaha, Ndayako, Tungan Gari, Tungan Kawo, Tungan Wawa, Wushishi, and Zungeru are located in the 9 LGAs of Bosso, Chanchaga, Gbako, Katcha, Kontagora, Lavun, Mokwa, Paikora, and Wushishi).

For more than 15 years, these women had been grew groundnut, cowpea, soybeans, rice, melon, and maize on small holdings of less than half a hectare each. Without support from the government, NGOs, or development partners, they faced several challenges – ranging from lack of formal titles to their lands, to a lack of funds to buy improved seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, tools and hire labor.

Unsurprisingly, all their hard work only produces low yields, and they cannot afford to cultivate more lands to increase production. They barely fee their families, and in an event of change in rainfall patterns like droughts or floods, it leads to food insecurity.

ACReSAL

In July 2023, the Niger State Project Management Unit (SPMU) of the World Bank-supported Agro-Climatic Resilience in Semi-Arid Landscapes (ACReSAL) Project of the Government of Nigeria, began an intervention in these communities.

SUPPORTING A HUNDRED WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE: Niger State ACReSAL Activity in Nigeria MediaageNG Women in twenty-five communities spread across nine Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Niger State in Nigeria cultivated and sold agricultural produce but, had been chronically vulnerable

economically (These 25 communities of Beji, Chibo, Dagodnagbe, Dan Zaria, Dankuwagi, Doko, Edozhigi, Emiwo, Etsutsagi, Kakakpangi, Kasakogi, Kodo, Kontagora, Kpatsuwa, Lanle, Magandu, Makusidi, Masaha, Ndayako, Tungan Gari, Tungan Kawo, Tungan Wawa, Wushishi, and Zungeru are located in the 9 LGAs of Bosso, Chanchaga, Gbako, Katcha, Kontagora, Lavun, Mokwa, Paikora, and Wushishi).

In collaboration with Niger State Agricultural and Mechanization Development Agency (NAMDA), the Niger SPMU identified one hundred poor and vulnerable women farmers, and provided each with improved seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides for one cropping season. In total, ACReSAL distributed 2,000 kgs of rice seeds, 4,550 kg of soybean, and 200 kg of maize seeds, 140 fifty-kilo bags of NPK and 70 bags of urea, 550 bags of organic fertilizers and 400 liters of herbicides.

Impacts

Despite receiving no training, the women relied on their farming experience and produced a bumper harvest in December 2023. Most women harvested around ten 65-kilo bags per hectare – when they used to get less than two bags.

Thus, Jummai Yabagi, a beneficiary farmer from Kodo community in the Bosso LGA, harvested ten 65-kilo bags of soybean from her 1 ha farm – instead of her usual 2 bags – and earned 450,000 Naira (~USD 275). A grandmother of triplets from her widowed daughter, who had lost one to malnutrition, she was able to nurse the two remaining children back to health and even send them back to school.

Another beneficiary, Fatima Abubakar of Edozhigi, a 52-year-old mother of six, and a rice farmer for over 30 years, spoke of her pregnant younger sister who bled to death 7 years earlier because they could not afford to take her to a hospital to deliver her baby. Where she used to harvest ten 50-kg bags of paddy every year on

her one-hectare plot of land, she harvested thirty 50-kg bags in January 2024 and another thirty bags in August 2024. Selling 30 of these 60 bags from the 2 harvests at 60,000 per bag, Fatima used the 1.8 million Naira (~USD 1,100) she earned to put her adopted niece in school, send her elder son to the University and the younger one to senior secondary school (both in Minna), and to buy a second-hand rice milling machine and 5 sheep for rearing young.

She also contributed money to help her husband buy a motorcycle. Each of the 100 women recount similar stories: with better harvests from better agricultural inputs, they have been able to feed their families better, earn more money to enroll their children in school – or send them back to school, buy assets, expand the area cultivated – and improve their social status.

At an average of six members per family, these one hundred women were able to feed and support another five hundred indirect beneficiaries, buying other crops and vegetables to supplement what they had grown – and thus improving nutrition and food security for their families. Some women beneficiaries also reported joint investments: The women from the Kakakpangi community, for instance, bought ten hectares of farmland, and cows, sheep & goats for fattening, while those from the Edozhigi communities bought machines to mill rice and to grind cereals and cassava, and also opened a provision store.



In general, the increase in income enabled the

women to expand their farming activities and agribusinesses, to pay their bills, afford hospital care for their families, support their husbands, and send their out-of-school children back to school. It has helped them make their own decisions and seek the guidance of their menfolk only when needed.

Health Sector: Stakeholders Converge for Maiden Joint Annual Review



Key players in the Nigerian health sector converged for the maiden Health Sector-wide Joint Annual Review (JAR) in a bid to improve the country's health care system.

Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Prof. Muhammad Ali Pate who led the gathering, said despite challenges faced, the health sector is on the right path, particularly extolling the visionary policies of President Bola Tinubu Renewed Hope Agenda for the country.

“Nigeria is making steady progress in health security amid challenges, the Minister said on Wednesday, in Abuja.

“Despite persisting challenges, Nigeria is moving in the right direction. Seventeen states have shown marked improvement in modern contraceptive usage, with six states doubling their efforts”, he stated.

The JAR centred on the importance of collaborative efforts between the federal and state governments.

According to the Minister, all thirty-six State Commissioners were central in coming up with a strategic blueprint aimed at access to primary healthcare, governance, health security, and

economic development through the health sector.

“In collaboration with the states, over 2,600 healthcare facilities are in advanced stages of revitalization, and an additional 2,000 facilities are earmarked for similar upgrades, all aimed at making primary healthcare centers fully functional.

“The initiative aligns with President Bola Tinubu’s commitment to making healthcare affordable and accessible to all Nigerians, marked by a historic increase in health budget allocations”, Prof. Pate added.

He said with the cooperation of partners, approximately 3 billion dollars was mobilised in complementary funding, including 2.1 billion dollars confirmed, boosting the efforts of the federal government.

He also added that under the PHC 2.0 reform, “we have emphasized equity by allocating financial and human resources across over 8,000 primary healthcare centers. Direct facility disbursements totaling 45 billion Naira have been sent to states, reaching our people directly”.

Prof. Pate further highlighted some key achievements of the Ministry under his watch to include, training of 40,000 frontline health workers, disbursements to over 8,000 primary healthcare facilities, and advancements in maternal health initiatives across 174 local governments.



Prof Pate (left) and Dr. Iziaq (right)

He said stakeholders in the health sector also launched the “State of Health” report and the Health Vulnerability and Adaptation report to address future challenges, including climate change impacts on health outcomes.

The Minister revealed that through the SWAp Coordinating Office, Dr. Muntaqa Umar Sadiq, all states have developed and hosted their Annual Operational Plans (AOPs), identifying gaps and setting the stage for future collaborations with our partners focused on population health outcomes.

“Our commitment to improving population health outcomes has shown tangible results. Data from the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) reveals a 16.7% reduction in under-five mortality between 2018 and 2023.

“We have also recorded a 40% reduction in diarrheal diseases, a 24% reduction in tuberculosis, and a 12% reduction in HIV prevalence. These achievements underscore the impact of our collective efforts”, he pointed out.

The Minister urged all stakeholders, including state governors, health workers, and citizens, to actively engage in strengthening healthcare, underscoring the Nigerian government commitment to achieve an equitable, high-quality healthcare for Nigerians.

“I call upon all of us here to action. The task ahead is enormous, and it demands our collective efforts and genuine partnerships. Let us embrace a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, including our development partners, to help us build a healthier Nigeria.

“To the state governors, I commend your commitment over the past 15 months. To our development partners, I extend my heartfelt thanks for aligning with SWAp principles and adopting the necessary behavioral shifts.

“Your support for our annual operational plans, bottom-up resource allocation, and focus on

high-burden local governments is invaluable. We look forward to your continued collaboration as we refine our resource coordination and align portfolios with our national health priorities”, Prof. Pate said.

Minister of State for Health and Social Welfare, Dr. Iziaq Adekunle Salako, said the JAR is important for stakeholders across the health sector to assess program performance, evaluate resource distribution, and review outcomes or issues that need to be addressed to improve performance.

“As a critical accountability tool, we shall be using the JAR to promote multi sectoral coordination and set clear priorities for the upcoming year, ensuring that all stakeholders remain aligned with national health goals”, Dr. Iziaq said.

Chairman of the Senate Committee on Health spoke on the need for greater accountability and funding in the country’s health sector to support primary healthcare and vulnerable groups.

Health Sector: Stakeholders Converge for Maiden Joint Annual Review MediaageNG Key players in the Nigerian health sector converged for the maiden Health Sector-wide Joint Annual Review (JAR) in a bid to improve the country’s health care system.

She said the National Assembly’s commitment to improving measurable health outcomes through a new accountability framework.

“Stakeholders, governments, politicians, community people, it’s about accountability,” Banigo remarked, lauding the revised framework that aims to strengthen oversight and identify gaps in health service delivery”, Senator Ipalibo Harry Banigo said.

She commended the Health Ministry for effectively utilizing the Vulnerable Group Fund (VGF), newly appropriated in the 2024 budget, to provide free surgeries for women suffering from

Obstetric Fistula.

Reaffirming primary healthcare as the “cornerstone” of Nigeria’s health system, Banigo stressed the need to ensure that resources allocated to primary healthcare centers yield visible results.

She also called for a substantial increase in the health sector budget, aspiring to align with the Abuja Declaration’s 15% budget target, which Nigeria has yet to achieve.

“We’ve made progress this year, but we want to see much more of the domestic budget dedicated to health,” she added, signaling the Senate Health Committee’s ongoing commitment to supporting Nigeria’s renewed health agenda.

Imo State Governor, Hope Uzodinma appreciated the leadership qualities of Prof. Pate, describing it as “visionary”, revealing that the collaboration between federal and state health bodies is crucial to addressing health challenges in the country.

He highlighted that the sector-wide approach (SWAP) is developed to streamline budgeting, planning, and reporting in health. He referred to the Health Sector Renewal Compact signed in December 2023 by President Bola Tinubu, which unites federal, state, and local governments under a shared goal of universal health coverage.

“The compact is a powerful demonstration of our collective commitment to universal health coverage,” emphasizing the need for collaboration across all levels to reach health goals and address Nigeria’s persistent issues with infant mortality and malnutrition.

The Governor acknowledged the critical support from international development partners, such as WHO and UNICEF, which contribute to minimizing program fragmentation and enhancing resource efficiency.

“Their cooperation is critical towards reducing program fragmentation and maximizing resource efficiency”, Mr. Uzodinma said. He assured stakeholders of the Nigerian Governors Forum’s dedication to health sector reforms.

He stressed the Forum’s commitment to tracking progress through a dedicated scorecard system.

“Together, we will build a more resilient, inclusive, and effective health care system that meets the needs of our people”, he enumerated.

Multi-Talented Media Professional, Favour Ulebor Shines Across Music, Journalism



Abuja-based media professional and gospel artist Favour Ulebor is making waves across multiple creative and professional fields, demonstrating her versatility and passion for excellence.

Popularly known as *Fayvure*, she continues to inspire audiences with her work in journalism, music, and photography.

Currently working with Vanguard Newspaper, one of Nigeria’s leading publications, Fayvure is a certified journalist from the Nigerian Institute of Journalism.

With a degree in Human Resource Management to her credit, she brings a unique blend of

creativity and professionalism to her craft.

Her work as a journalist highlights her ability to communicate stories that resonate deeply with readers.

Beyond the newsroom, Fayvure is making a name for herself in Nigeria’s gospel music scene.

Known for her soulful and faith-driven melodies, she has released songs such as *‘Abiding Place’* and her latest single, *‘Adonai Reigns’*. Both tracks showcase her deep spirituality and commitment to sharing messages of hope and devotion through music.

In addition to her contributions to media and music, Fayvure is also an accomplished nature photographer. Her photography focuses on capturing the beauty of creation, offering viewers a glimpse of the natural world through her artistic lens.

Speaking about her journey, Fayvure said, “Whether through words, music, or images, I aim to inspire people to see beauty, hope, and purpose in every aspect of life.”

Fayvure’s ability to excel across multiple fields has made her a role model for many young Nigerians, showcasing the possibilities that come with dedication, faith, and passion.

Women Produce Businesses Impactful on the Nigerian Economy – Minister State, FCT



The Nigerian Minister, Federal Capital Territory

(FCT) has said women produce businesses that are socially responsible and impactful on the Nigerian economy.

She also said women as vital contributors to the growth of a nation are catalysts for innovation and sustainable development.

“It is time we recognize that empowering women entrepreneurs is not just a matter of equity; it is an economic imperative” Mahmoud said at the Abuja Business and Investment Summit, on Thursday in Abuja.

“From limited access to financing and mentorship to social and cultural constraints. The challenges are numerous”, she stated.

She said women face barriers to entrepreneurship, despite their potential. However, “most are breaking barriers, creating jobs, and driving economic growth.

“They are in technology, agriculture, manufacturing, and services—proving that their contributions are as diverse as they are impactful”, she enumerated.

The Group Head, Abuja Investments Company Limited, Maureen Tamuno, in her remarks, said things that hinder women from being successful must be put out through favorable policies for growth.

She said the 2-day summit is a foundation for actionable strategies that promote gender equity, drive inclusive growth and foster a business environment that can enable the success of both gender.

Tamuno called for collaboration and partnership as key to unlocking new opportunities and creating an investment landscape that embraces innovation, nurtures entrepreneurship, and delivers lasting impact for the communities.

BHCPF: Nigeria To Expand Number Of Primary Healthcare Centres



Prof Muhammad Ali Pate

The Nigerian government has made plans to expand the number of Primary Health Centres (PHC) from 8,300 to 17,000, through the National Primary Health Care Development Agency(NPHCDA) and with the objective of improving health care services across the country.

According to the Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare, the government has also set aside N260 billion to revitalize the PHC's facilities.

“There is N260 billion sitting right now at the states' level. All the states of the federation have been mobilised for the revitalisation of the PHCs, said the Minister, Prof Muhammad Ali Pate, on Friday at the sectoral ministerial press briefing in Abuja to mark the first anniversary of President Bola Tinubu in office.

“When we said we're going to revitalize our PHCs, the key to doing that is the resources to be available. So, a lot of efforts that have been going on over the months are to mobilise the resources to deploy, with the states having this N260bn in their pockets available”, he added.

He also explained that the government at the national level will provide the states with guidelines for the implementation of the revitalisation and equipment of medical facilities.

“When we disbursed the BHCPF, we do that in public and we would put hotlines for Nigerians to report if any of the resources are being misused. We asked the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission and the Economic and Financial

Crimes Commission to keep an eye on it because the implementation is at the state level, Prof. Pate continued.

“We raised the resources but the states have to implement, but we have to make sure that the resources go to the intended objectives in terms of infrastructure equipment.

“The trainers have been trained in all the states of the federation, and I believe in the next one or two weeks, the training will commence. The guidelines have been revised, and printed and we raise the resources to be able to do that so that over the next three years, at least 120,000 frontline health workers, those who are serving our population in rural areas will have the capability, the skills, in addition to the infrastructure and the equipment that we have provided”.

The Minister also reiterated that President Tinubu is determined to unlock the healthcare value chain and domesticate production capabilities to produce what Nigerians need.

“He approved the presidential initiative to unlock the healthcare value chain in October. Since then, we have made steady progress in terms of unlocking Nigeria’s healthcare value chain.

“The first policy measure is a draft executive order which we have now produced, and finalised, and if the President assents, it would reduce the barriers in terms of import of raw materials, import of equipment for pharmaceuticals and devices so that Nigerians will be able to produce what we need, whether it’s syringes or needles, whether it’s generic pharmaceuticals and also test kits, and long-lasting insecticide-treated nets for malaria.

“We had mentioned that bed nets that we use for malaria are produced outside that, why can’t we produce them here?”

He noted that international investors are coming to indicate interest in producing health and

medical products in the country.

“The President has been very effective in marketing Nigeria that we are open for business and drawing foreign direct investment.

“We have seen that in many of the trips that he has taken abroad, and in the health sector, we have seen increasing interest from external investors who are willing to come and produce in Nigeria”.

I’m Proud I Made History - Chidimma Adetshina



Chidimma Adetshina, Miss Nigeria has spoken of her pride at coming second in the Miss Universe competition, as well as being named Miss Africa and Oceania.

Born and bred in South Africa, Adetshina originally competed in the country of her birth. However, she was subjected to trolling and xenophobic abuse because, her father is Nigerian.

"I'm so proud of myself and I just made history," she said, shortly after losing out to Miss Denmark, Victoria Kjær Theilvig.

In October, the South African authorities threatened to strip her of her identity papers, following allegations that her mother, who has Mozambican roots, had committed identity fraud to gain South African nationality.

Neither Adetshina nor her mother commented on the allegations. South African authorities pointed out that Adetshina could not have participated in any alleged fraud as she was an infant at the time.

After the furore in South Africa, and the doubts about her nationality, she competed in the Miss Nigeria competition, which she won to qualify for the Miss Universe contest held in Mexico City.

The eventual winner of Miss South Africa, Mia le Roux, pulled out of Miss Universe last week citing an undisclosed medical condition. She was the first deaf woman to become Miss South Africa.

In September, Adetshina, a law student, told the BBC that she still saw herself as "proudly South African" and "proudly Nigerian".

But after Miss Universe South Africa tweeted to congratulate her on her second place, along with both South African and Nigerian flags, some South Africans responded by saying she did not represent them.

Speaking with the BBC, Adetshina said she would be seeking therapy to help her deal with the trauma following the abuse she was subjected to.

She is the highest placed black African woman in Miss Universe since South Africa's Zozibini Tunzi won the competition in 2019.

I Enjoy Anything That's Natural And It Led Me To Create Pure Pickers Agromart



Herbs and spices are both excellent seasonings.

They emit delicious aromas and add a pleasant flavor to any cuisine. Seasonings are high in antioxidants and have other beneficial compounds, they provide several health advantages. Most herbs and spices can even be used as an alternative for medicine, also, serve as natural preservatives. Herbs and spices boost the body system and one of the aids to a healthy lifestyle. At the Agriculture Summit Africa, held at Transcorp Hilton, Abuja, we met with Foluke Olajide who told us what led her into Agromart business and the health benefits of consuming spices made from natural herbs. Excerpts:

Good day! Can we meet you?

My name is Foluke Olajide and I'm from Kogi State. I'm a chartered accountant by profession but, passionate about nature. I graduated from Ambrose Ali University, Ekpoma, where I read Accounting. I have a Masters in Business Administration from the National Open University, Abuja. I enjoy anything that's natural, which is what led me into this business. I have two businesses - Pure Pickers Agromart that produces natural seasoning powder, using natural spices for general well-being. Meals come out tasty using just spices and herbs. We also have a business farm. It's not ready but, we are working on it. In our organic farm, we produce herbs, spices and vegetables. Then, the second line of it has to do with natural skin care where we produce natural soaps. We also train on how to make natural soaps, what women can get within their environment. We have women who come around to learn how to make soaps using mangoes and banana fruits to make soaps (laughs).

I have a book titled 'Some Love It Spicy'. It dealt on how to use spices and herbs and the book is sold online. That's basically what I do.

What really motivated you into this business that you are involved with?

Well, I call myself an accidental spice formulator in the sense that it just happened without planning for it. I don't like eating food and they taste this same way. Whenever I go to the market, I meet the Hausa guys, you know they always have spices. I ask them the difference between each, even taste them. Sometimes, I don't even know what I need. I noticed some of them taste too salty. So, I make experiment when I start using the spices and they were tasty. That was when I began taking interest in spices. I made researches, go online, know more about them, practicalise and start making them. In fact, I have a friend who keeps asking me for a particular blend but, I can't even remember how I made them because I was just experimenting.

I had a health challenge that made it difficult for me to go to the toilet. I take a lot of veggies but, somehow, it goes and come back again. Then, I was consistently using spices and herbs. After some time, due to my herbs and spices intake, I noticed it became very easy for me to go to the toilet. It made me want to know more. I carried out more research and realized that there are more health benefits because I was actually using these spices on my meal. That was what led me.



Then, a family I gave the herbs and blends said it was nice. Someone asked me how much do I sell? I just sent it to her as a gift. I began selling, and here we are today. We produce for the market. Though, not fully in the market but, we have started production and we are working on getting our NAFDAC certification to go fully into the market.

How have you been able to sell without

NAFDAC registration number?

Okay, I have been selling online, to friends and getting what I call private labelling for people who once bought for their personal use, for restaurant or cooking events. That's how we have been making sales. At times, I get the opportunity to talk about it, teach women how to use spices to cook.

The sales of the book is not that much but, it has helped.

How friendly has the environment been towards your business?

Well, it's not too friendly because, we use a lot of spices locally, that's one. And, we get them from farmers. For instance, ginger. The prices of ginger this year is something else. From personal research, insecurity is one of the problems because, farmers can't go to their farms. This is something the government can come in and help farmers. We still have to go back to the farm. Most of our products, spices are from the farmers. Then, in the area of growing spices and herbs, the main spice that most farmers focus on is ginger, garlic, onions and tumeric with other herbs, which is a big market. For instance, I use Oregano that I plant in my home for my business.

Oregano is very easy to farm and it's a herb. So, imagine if we have farmers who are also planting Oregano on a large scale, we can even start exporting because, we don't even have enough. I have farmers who plant Oregano but, we don't even have enough. So, we have to still import Oregano as herbs into Nigeria. If the government can bring up policies that will look into planting herbs, using sustainable agricultural technologies, I'm very sure there will be a key market for herbs.

There are many herbs. Infact, some spices are gradually going extinct in the market because, people are not seeing the benefit or the money

because people don't really know much about it. For instance, in Nigeria, we produce what we call African black pepper, Uziza in the east. It is gradually becoming a problem harvesting. Farmers are feeling like they not making enough money from it. So, instead of letting it fruit very well, they will rather sell the leaves, thereby, killing the seed, and the seed is more expensive than the leaf. So, it's just about opening their eyes to see and know the benefits and the money they can make in preserving the fruit to produce seed.

There are many other spices. Infact from my research, I may not be able to cover all the spices that we produce in Nigeria but, the ones that we trade in the country. There are so many of them. People are now becoming more enlightened about their health, looking for medical alternatives to the usual pharmaceutical drugs. And, all these herbs and spices are very useful, our fathers used them and it's helpful. So, people are going back to nature.

Alright! In two minutes, can you tell us about your strength before we go to the challenges you think you are facing already?

My strength at the moment is my ability to formulate different kind of blends for different foods. I can give you different blends for different kinds of food that you want to cook, that's one. Then, I also have strength in formulating herbs to help hypertensive patients because, they have to reduce their salt intake. So, I have the ability to formulate spices and blends that will suit their health conditions. So, they have tasty meals and watch their salt intake.

In three minutes, can you tell us the challenges you face and how it can be surmounted?

The challenges I'm facing at the moment has more to do with finance because, banks wouldn't give us loans. They wouldn't because, we are small and we don't have collateral. Unless, I have to pick my personal collateral into the bank.

Banks are not ready to financed small scale industry. Although, the government is trying to help with certification with NAFDAC but, the procedure is still very clumsy and expensive. What you are required to put in place is too much that a lot of SMEs are backing out and just selling their products in the market, not giving a damn to having NAFDAC number, which is not good.

So, I think more can be done to getting SMEs registered and certified with NAFDAC and other bodies. Then, the general economic situation because, we have to buy some spices, not all are grown in Nigeria. The general economic situation is not favorable, farmers cannot give us what we need, when we need them and at good prices. The whole bulk falls on the customers with less income to buy other things. Everybody now focuses on let me just get the little meal and nothing extra.

The final question now, in the next foreseeable future, how do you project your business to be?

In the next five years, I see us having a large share in the Nigerian market and we are hoping to expand to other West African countries. From my interactions I see a lot of it. A lot of people are already asking for our products. In the next five years, we are hoping to have our organic farm in full operations selling fresh vegetables, fresh herbs, fresh spices and also deyharaated products to customers

What are the mechanisms you have put in place to achieve all these?

For the organic farm, I have gotten a space because, I need land and I'm training on how to use more sustainable agricultural techniques, green house, hydroponics so that in the small space we have, we are able to have more yield than using the traditional way of cultivation. Then, for owing a large market share, we are working and collaborating with many organisations. We are working on our

certification so that we can sell our products outside Nigeria.

Thank you speaking with us.

It was enjoyable.

Nigeria Committed to Bridging Youth Generational Divide



Nigeria's Vice President on Thursday advocated for collective efforts in bridging generational divide in the country, thereby, reaffirming the trust the present administration has on the youth.

He said empowering the young ones in the country is a foundation for Nigeria's long term development objective and Africa's integration goals.

Kashim Shettima, while revealing that the youth are pivotal in Nigeria and Africa's future, they are the fulcrum of President Bola Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda and can steer national progress.

"There is no nation that can prosper without investing in its youth, Shettima said at the 2024 Youth Legacy Conference, held at the Presidential Villa, Abuja, Nigeria's capital.

"The President is deeply committed to ensuring that the youth not only have a voice but are active participants in shaping our collective destiny", he added.

Represented by the Deputy Chief of Staff to the President (Office of the Vice President), Senator Ibrahim Hassan Hadejia, Shettima emphasised that the young generation are not just leaders of

tomorrow; but, are the anchors of today.

He said the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and Agenda 2063, is a platform for young Nigerians to show their innovative prowess, as entrepreneurs and leaders.

"AfCFTA is not just about trade; it is about creating opportunities for our youth to connect, innovate, and lead Africa into a new era of prosperity. Agenda 2063 envisions an integrated and prosperous Africa, but it is the energy, creativity, and resilience of our youth that will transform this vision into reality", Senator Shettima further said.

While admonishing the Mandela Washington Fellows for its exemplary leadership and service, he said what it has shown is the proof that when youth are given the chance to succeed, they exceed expectations.

"Your work in education, healthcare, and social justice serves as an inspiration for generations to come", he posited.

The conference saw the launch of the Ubuntu Trade App, a digital drive aimed at boosting Africa's trade integration and market access for young entrepreneurs.

The United States Ambassador to Nigeria, Richard M. Mills, represented by the Deputy Chief of Mission, US Embassy, David J. Greene, encouraged the association to build a network of a free trade area for improved ideas and human connections in the continent of Africa.

He commended Sen. Shettima for his support in hosting the event. The Diplomat was convinced of the leadership training, and networking opportunities availed for young Africans working to fast-track economic growth and prosperity to strengthen democratic institutions and to enhance peace security in communities, particularly Nigeria and across Africa.

President of the MWFAAN, Ms Farida Yahaya,

said the association is intent in addressing Nigeria's pressing challenges and explained that the goal of the association lies in its commitment to the principle of "service before self".

She added that the alumni has shown this through wise use of its resources in growing African communities.

"We were inspired, equipped, and empowered by the Mandela Washington Fellowship to become catalysts for positive change", she said.

"Today, as we reflect on this remarkable decade, we are awed by the collective impact of our alumni.

"Our association has been more than just a network; it has been a movement. We have come together, driven by a shared passion for service and a commitment to making a difference.

"We have broken barriers, challenged the status quo, and made significant strides in addressing Nigeria's most pressing challenges. From grassroots initiatives to national policy reforms, our impact has been far-reaching and enduring", she enumerated.

The theme for this year's conference is "Shaping Africa's Future with AfCFTA and Agenda 2063".

Trauma Care Centre Launches Initiative for Persons With Disability



The Acting Executive Director, Edoaka Suleiman Onoja Heritage Peace and Traumatic Care Centre, on Tuesday, called on relevant stakeholders in the public and private sectors to be involved in creating a sustainable impact to come to the needs of persons with disability in the country.

Amina Adamu said those with disability, especially women, are already going through a lot of trauma that could be beyond their capacity. "Therefore, it is important they are brought to the fore to talk about their feelings or pains and what they go through, managing challenges of life, especially in their conditions".

She revealed these at the official launch of the Empowering Her Project, organised by the Centre, in collaboration with MacArthur Foundation and the Joint National Association of Persons With Disability (JONAPWD), in Kuje Area Council, Abuja.

Trauma Care Centre Launches Initiative for Persons With Disability MediaageNG The Acting Executive Director, Edoaka Suleiman Onoja Heritage Peace and Traumatic Care Centre, on Tuesday, called on relevant stakeholders in the public and private sectors to be involved in creating a sustainable impact to come to the needs of persons with disability in the country.

The project is aimed at boosting the resilience of the vulnerable, solve internal conflicts, and appreciate their well-being.

"Trauma is real but, neglected and overlooked. Many are already facing this challenge daily", Adamu said in her opening remarks at the event.

"Imagine people with disabilities, especially women, they go through a lot normally, coupled with dealing with disability issues and going through trauma they cannot think about. It is important we bring the vulnerable to talk about their feelings and how they can be helped.

Trauma Care Centre Launches Initiative for

Persons With Disability MediaageNG The Acting Executive Director, Edoaka Suleiman Onoja Heritage Peace and Traumatic Care Centre, on Tuesday, called on relevant stakeholders in the public and private sectors to be involved in creating a sustainable impact to come to the needs of persons with disability in the country.

“Doing this and giving them the opportunity to speak and express their concern will aid us to help them with our Empowering Her Project, and in doing so, we are enabling every other person”, she said.

Sa’adatu Adamu, the Founder, Secure D-Future International Initiative (SDF), another of the Project collaborators, emphasized on why people living with disability must be given the necessary attention to make them feel part of the society.

“They are so vulnerable, she said.”

It’s important to get them to that point where they are informed to know what to do, appreciate themselves, regardless of their condition, Sa’adatu pointed out.

She also urged the government to come up more with inclusive policies for the disabled and “make them part of everything that we do”.

“I’m talking about inclusion. If they are part of everything, they will feel together. This (project) is an opportunity to express they feel and know that they are very crucial. Everyone is important. The government should put the disabled at the centre, for an inclusive society”, she enumerated.

Maiko Ibrahim Tanko, Secretary, Kuje Area Council, representing the Chairman, said in every community, there is a disabled. Therefore, the Empowering Her Project is a welcome development.

He also stated that more provisions by the government need to be made for persons with disability.

The Human Resource Manager, SDF, Chinemere Nnenna said those living with disability also battle with challenges that come with it, Including internal conflicts.

She added that coming out and not feeling like every other person, already looks like a problem.

“This could be a way of affecting their mental wellbeing. That’s the trauma we are talking about. The reality that they are already disabled is traumatic”, Chinemerem said.

However, she encouraged the disabled to find positives in their conditions and survive like every other persons.

Nigeria Remains Resolute In Malaria Elimination - Minister



The Nigerian government has reiterated its stance on being resolute to eliminate malaria.

Revealing that the disease is not just a health crisis, he said it is also an economic and developmental emergency that must be put out.

“Malaria continues to exert an unacceptable toll on Nigeria With 27% of global malaria cases and 31% of global malaria deaths, our country bears the heaviest burden of this disease, Prof Muhammad Ali Pate said at the inaugural meeting of the Advisory on Malaria Elimination in Nigeria (AMEN), in Abuja.

The launch of an advisory body is a bold and decisive step to confront and address a wicked problem that has undermined the health and economic growth of the country, according to the Minister, contained in a statement issued by

the Deputy Director, Information & Public Relations of the Ministry, Alaba Balogun, on Tuesday.

Pate said in 2022, over 180,000 Nigerian children under the age of five lost their lives to malaria- a tragedy we have the tools to prevent.

He stated that the economic consequences of malaria include reduction in productivity, increase in out-of-pocket health expenditures and, compounds the challenges of poverty.

He further that the annual loss to Nigeria's GDP from malaria exceeds \$1.1billion, a stark reminder of the economic imperative of elimination.

Adding that malaria elimination is a critical component of the Nigeria Health Sector Renewal Investment Initiative (NHSRII) framework for transforming the health sector, in alignment with the Renewed Hope Agenda of the present government, Prof. Pate acknowledged the urgency of the task as reflected in the National Malaria Strategic Plan 2021-2025. It includes reduction of malaria prevalence to below 10% and halve malaria- related mortality by 50 deaths per 1,000 live birth.

The Coordinating Minister also highlighted the importance of traditional and religious leaders to drive grassroots support and influence behaviour change.

He said this will complement AMEN, in promoting use of insecticide- treated nets, chemoprevention and vaccines.

The Minister of State for Health & Social Welfare, Dr. Iziaq Adekunle Salako added that the Advisory body as a group of experts will provide evidence based advisory to help the country in not only reducing its unacceptable malaria burden but, "set us on a realistic path to a malaria free Nigeria".

For us to succeed, private sector, international partners, healthcare workers and, the communities we serve must be harnessed and coordinated", Dr. Salako said.

The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry, Daju Kachollom mni; represented by Dr. Chukwuma Anyaike, Director Public Health Department in the Ministry; stated that the renewed commitment by the present administration has brought a new life to the effort to eliminate the disease.

It is pertinent to state that the Advisory on Malaria Elimination in Nigeria (AMEN) is made up of globally renowned experts under the leadership of Prof. Rose Leke; charged with refocusing on advancing evidence-based solutions that address current challenges, ensuring that malaria elimination is prioritised in the budgets and plans of all levels of government and creating frameworks for accountability that ensures sustained progress.

Transparency, A One-Format Solution To Address Nigeria's Challenges - Lucy James Abagi, Chief Executive, Public Private Development Centre



Lucy James Abagi

Harnessing the potentials of digitalization is key to remaining relevant and adapt to trends.

Digital transformation creates new opportunities, also, it could have its own risk. A nation cannot thrive, create a competitive environment, unless they radically adapt to the demands of the digital era. Transparency enables countries to embrace data, use them to make better and quicker decisions. It also encourages public and private employees to challenge the status quo, create a dynamic understanding of those who demand their services and allows for distributed decision-making, co-creation, promoting a continuous experimentation and learning, ethical decision-making and proactive governance. Digitizing a nation's public service commands information governance with clear transparency and accountability. Data integration, data exchange, and supply chain management, transparency in public and private service can be used to make better policies. Also, if processes and their statuses are digitally monitored, the governed will have more in the government on how things are done. Well-documented processes and a transparent workflow boost a nation's future. In this interview with Lucy James Abagi, the CEO of Public Private Development Centre, she spoke on why the Nigerian government must embrace digitalization to gain trust from the masses. Excerpts:

Can we know your name, your background, educational background, address, how far you've come?

Thank you. My name is Lucy James Abagi. I'm the Chief Executive Officer of the Public and Private Development Center (PPDC). A bit about my background is, I'm a Nigerian. Very important to state that I'm a Nigerian. I've been in the development sector for over eight years and managed over 30 development projects across different sectors. I joined the PPDC about a year ago, as Director of Partnership and Innovation. After eight months, I was interviewed for the role of the CEO when my predecessor, Jibril Shittu moved to the INGO Forum in South Sudan where

he sits over 300 organizations there currently. And simultaneously, I was made the CEO after a very rigorous process with the Board of Directors.

So, PPDC has a Board of Directors and a senior management team that sit on the affairs of the organization. PPDC is about 20 years plus and I'm the fifth CEO. Trying to fit into their roles has been interesting, as my predecessors have done exceptionally well sustaining the mandates and ensuring accountability institutions.

PPDC seeks to ensure access to justice for all, promote safe online and AI accountability through our digital governance initiatives, advocate for open contracting standards through its procurement governance, and drive behavioral change through its Homevida portfolio. Thank you.

You're welcome.

Mrs. Abagi: Is that a lot of information?

It's okay Ma.

Alright. So, now let's go straight to the first question that we have here. At that high-level stakeholders consultation forum, you said Nigeria's problems are multisectoral and we require the same approach to deal with those problems. Can you explain that?

Yes, I agree with that. I've always been a very strong advocate with that statement because, when you move into the education sector and WASH - that's Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene, you will notice similar challenges. There's either corruption or misappropriation of funds. There's either the fact that our benefiting communities are not carried along in the need assessment or low-budget allocations for human-centred issues that should feed into the capital expenditure of the country's budget and lack of qualified staffing.

Then, when you move a bit into the electoral

sector, that's governance, a bit into governance/elections, and a bit around data protection. You also see that the same issues duplicate themselves. You could begin to ask yourself now as a Nigerian, how many times have my fingerprints been taken? If you want to get a NIMC, your fingerprint will be requested, same process is repeated for international passport, NIN Registration, and when opening a new bank account, Is it difficult for us to have a central databank? It's not difficult. My fingerprint can never change, that's the truth. Your fingerprint is your unique identity any day, any time. Two persons can't have the same fingerprint. So, why do I have to give my fingerprint at every point when technology has fast advanced reducing these bureaucracies.

Then, when you go to the education sector and health sectors, one of the key problems that is well known is lack of sufficient budgetary allocation, which some stakeholders have argued that it is not even the major issue, as it is when it comes to implementation. And I agree with them to some point. Why? If Nigeria is setting aside 10% of their fiscal budget to education, can we ensure that that 10% is judiciously used?. For instance, the current 2025 fiscal budget is about 47.9 trillion naira approved by the Federal Executive Council (FEC).

If at least 10% of that goes to education, can we be sure that children will no longer sit under a leaking roof, under dilapidated structures, because, that's what you see, especially across public schools especially in marginalized/hard to reach communities. What we see is that contractors are not held accountable, it means that procurement processes, which are supposed to be digitized, in most cases, are not transparent. Meaning that every Nigerian should be able to log into the procurement portals of every ministry, department, agency and see the list of contractors bidding for and who the successful bidder is, what the amount of the contract is, who the benefiting communities are,

the timeline of the project, the bills of quantity for the project. I don't know if you understand me. If I, as an ordinary Nigerian, let me use that word, cannot have access to that, on the internet, meaning that I can log into the Ministry of Education portal and see this information, I won't have to do any bad governance protest.

Why? Because I have all the information that shows that this is where taxpayers' monies are going to. And I like to state that this is taxpayers' money. And so, if we are contributing to the development of our country via our taxes, we need to see where the monies are going to and we need to know who we can hold accountable, if those projects are not implemented.



Youth with a banner protesting against bad governance in the country.

And where am I taking my directions from? That fits into our conversation during that meeting and our conversation was around digital rights. Why is the government trampling down on people, spending billions of Naira on surveillance, spending billions of Naira to ensure that they arrest journalists? And the conversation that day was, can we spend that amount of money to end terrorism, to end Boko Haram? Because these are the main issues and not the people that are voicing out their concerns when you are not making information accessible, available, in readable format. It means that if I am in the village and I can't access the internet, I don't have a phone, I can wake up and buy a newspaper and know that this particular contractor has been awarded by the Ministry of Education to renovate my primary health care centre, or Ministry of Health, to

renovate my primary health centre.

And I know where to get that contractor and the contractor will not step into my community without following due process. These are the reasons that bring agitation, chaos, insecurity, people want to protest, because they feel that government is not working for them. You understand?

So, if government can bring out an holistic solution, and that holistic solution, I tell you, is to digitize our processes because, the world is fast moving. Today we are talking about AI. There are lots of inventions, innovations that the developed countries are coming up with every day. They are not waiting for us. That's the truth. They are moving with the speed of light and we are just trying to catch up. We are playing catch up at this point in time. And I feel that our government is also not studying the ecosystem. They are not studying the trends. If we are studying the trends, we will adjust our systems, we will adjust our policies, we will adjust our institutions, that's very important. Our institutions would need to adjust their processes and get digitalized.

And I want to wrap up with this. If establishments like the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Water Resources, INEC, Environment, can have an holistic process, have their database linked, have their budget in the open space, have their contractors in the open space, have the citizens engaged with these contractors, Nigerians will be able to confirm that corrupt practices are curbed. You know what that feeds into? Credibility, trust. It makes the citizens know that the government is working for them. I would love to emphasize that the government is, first of all, service to its people. Leadership is a call to service. It is a call to serve even the lowest of the lowest.

The child on the street that the government arrested for bad governance is supposed to be served. It is out of hunger that we have children

that are not in school, protesting. They were supposed to be in school but were arrested and kept in detention for days until Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and international bodies began to cry out because those children collapsed at the court. Do you understand?

So, we need a one-format solution, which is transparency. Get information to citizens when it's needed. Let us be able to know who our monies are going to for contracting because, you know, over time going to the field, one of the things that I personally spotlighted, I want to point out, I think I pointed out in one or two media engagements, was the fact that particularly I think it was in Yobe State. We're tracking a project in Yobe State. Do you know what happened? Yobe SUBEB had contracted multiple projects because they do that annually.

You know, a particular contractor renovating school buildings, Sadly, removed the dilapidated roofs, the ceilings, the windows and everything and carried it to another place that he was supposed to do renovation to fix, the ones he removed from the old school we went to supervise. Do you know what happened? It was the community who we had trained, who we had provided information, that raised an alarm to Yobe SUBEB and said, come on, this contractor you hired, this is what this person has done.

He has come to remove the roofs here and other dilapidated materials to another location that he was paid to do fresh work, meaning that in less than two years, you will hear that that structure is deteriorated, is dilapidated and needs to be renovated and fixed again in the budget. So you see the problem.

If the government can be transparent, you are not doing it for just you. You're doing it for the people. You're also doing it to manage the scarce resources that you will not be having duplication of projects on the budget.

I don't want to use the wrong word. I want to use the right word. Duplication of projects in the budget because when we at CSO go on tracking exercise and we say that this school was in the budget last year, why is it here again in the budget?

And we'll be like, no, this is a duplication of a project because it was already implemented two years ago and it was in the budget. It was also in the tender because we track procurement.

It was in the tender, it was awarded to contractors who are having to come back again and slate this. So it's a multistakeholder issue. And there's no one-size-fits-all, unfortunately.



School children under dilapidated building writing.

From the angle that I see it, I want to take it back to some of the work we are doing in the justice sector. When you go to the court now, funny enough, I don't know if you've been to the court before, and have you seen the judge? When you're talking, maybe you're giving your statement, you say, Madam, wait, we are writing. In this age, when you go to the prisons, you say that we have over 80,000 young bloods, young Nigerians, held in custody that have never seen, at least 50% of them, have never seen the four walls of a court. They've not appeared before a judge.

I told you about water sanitation hygiene, and then came back again to real life incidents where you see that Nigerians are beginning to

lose, not beginning, Nigerians have long lost trust in governance.

What is PPDC doing? What we are actually doing now is the work of the government to digitize the courts, put it on the budget, to automate court processes so that Nigerians will not be looking for their file when they go to court. If you go to some courts now that PPDC has not automated their processes, you will see manual processes still being used with inefficient filing and storage systems.

So imagine if your file is among that one. Which of the staff will have the love to go and start digging files that are just scattered everywhere? Some of them, you know, because they are papers, they are not automated, they are not in the system, so you will not be able to locate them.

So there is actually no sector in Nigeria that you can say is working, that we could take footprints from to duplicate the same strategy. That's why I said our problems are multi-sectoral and will require a multi-sectoral approach for us to solve this problem headlong.

To wrap up with this particular question, as I have taken a bit of time to explain, is the fact that what is the role of the government? What is the role of civil society? What is the role of private sectors? What is the role of the international partners? It's so bad that we have to depend on donor funds to advocate for change in our country. That's why even when you're approaching donors and say, this is what we want to do, it will be sounding strange because they are like, is that not the duty of the government? When you talk about the Freedom of Information Act, you say, give us money so that we can push for the government to implement the FOI Act that was passed over 13 years ago in order to make information readily available to the masses. And after 13 years since the FOI ACT has been passed, we are still conversing around Ministries Departments and

Agencies (MDAs). We are still trying to make them see reason as to why it is necessary for them to make this information accessible. So the role of the government is to lead.

The role of the government is to prioritize the needs of the people. And what is the need of the people? They want the government to work for them. I shouldn't be thinking about how to pay my child's school fees.

I shouldn't be thinking of how to get to the hospital and queue for hours. Because the minute you think of how many hours you're going to wait to see a doctor, if you can even afford a doctor now. You will have no option but to seek alternative and unverifiable health care services.

How many primary health care centers are working in Nigeria, my brother? How many? In most communities you won't find one. Sometimes it's difficult for you to get a doctor. Or to get a nurse to attend to you. Or to get paracetamol that is good, not the one that is fake. That's why the problem is multisectoral. I don't even understand. Many people have taken drugs and have lost their lives.

Many people have, because of all the issues, self medicated themselves and had to go to pharmacies that are not licensed by the government. Is the government doing their work? If the government was doing their work, nobody would go and open an unlicensed pharmacy and sell drugs to Nigerians that would kill Nigerians. If the government were doing their work, even regulating prices of food in the market, wouldn't be a problem because, that's why the government does not believe that Nigerians are hungry. Nigerians are actually hungry because foodstuffs are expensive. Why? There's no regulation of prices.

You go to this one, he's selling one bag of rice, 100,000. This one is selling one bag of rice, 105,000. This one is selling one bag of rice,

80,000. Who is regulating the prices? And the government has actually even lost its place. Because you can't hold people accountable when you aren't accountable and you can't regulate what you do not fund.

You've said a lot and I have a question towards that direction.

Please ask.

You spoke about a whole lot of things and I think I want to take it one step after the other.

Please do.

You spoke about digitalization, which I feel is very key to growth in Nigeria.

With our country, our current status now, with the inflation and everything going on, do you think Nigerians can afford digitalization, especially with corruption? And second question, which we're going to link to the first, how many years do you think Nigerians can afford digitalization? Because when you spoke earlier, you made us notice, or you brought us to an awareness that with digitalization we can curb a whole lot, both in the judicial sector, in every sector. So if we say, okay, this is what the government wants to put in place, do you think they have enough money to fund the project? Because it's going to be a lot. Do you understand what I mean? It's going to be a lot.

But I know of recent, they tried to do some things but, some of these things they tried to do, they are still not working. So I'm still trying to buttress my question. How do you think Nigeria can afford, can achieve digitalization? How many years do you think they can achieve that? I think those are the basic questions.

I would like to answer your questions from another view. Our electoral process has been digitized. Has this solved the issues? No. Digitalization is not the only way to solve corruption. But one thing that's going to solve

our issue is loyalty to Nigeria. Our ethics framework must be preached and implemented so that Nigeria can work for everybody. That's why you see that in developed countries, people report cases to the government.

If you go to the U.S. now, and you hear a gunshot, they will call their government. Like nobody will do that in Nigeria. I don't know if you understand.

But the only way to penetrate the system is to build trust. People know when things are working. You don't need to prove to someone that something is working.

When you see a good thing, you know that it's good. Good leadership can be seen because people will feel it. You don't need to come to the radio to make a broadcast of what you're doing.

And like I said, I always tell people, you don't need to come to commend yourself as a leader. The people commend you. The people should be the ones talking about you.

Because you know why? If you're working for the people, you're serving everyone under your reach. Mr. President is serving all over 200 million Nigerians.

As the OOI of this country. He is serving all Nigerians. And so if a particular set of people, the rich, the bourgeois, are the ones saying he's working, and the common man is not saying he's working, because the common man cannot afford a cup of garri, then the answer to its impacts lies in their responses.

Until a greater percentage of the marginalized, the people that cannot afford some means of life, the people in the un-reached, the people in the marginalized communities, there are people in this country, my dear, that Okada cannot take you to where they are living. That's the truth. That's the truth.

When you go to grassroots work, you know that we are privileged to be here. But there are other

people that are in the unreached communities, that are looking up to the government for their lives and their demands are not much. They just want food, water, good roads, and health care. Nigerians are not expensive. Give us food, give us education, give us water, give us healthcare.

Some people don't even need lights. That's the truth. At the end of the day, what are they using lights for? They don't have electronics or phones to charge. So if Nigerians can get basic, they call it basic social amenities, our problems are solved.

Now, why do we need digitalization? Digitalization helps development to get to those marginalized communities. Why? If, for instance, most of the people that you see in pretrial detention are the poor.

I went to a correctional center in Nasarawa State. One of the things that gave me strength to move through there, because I've seen worse, that you see people in prison, that the toilet is very close to where they are lying down. They are sleeping on the bare floor. The place that they eat is not far from the toilet.

Have you seen sardines in a sardine container? They showed me how they sleep, because it's overcrowded. This one will turn his head and face this side, this one head will face this other side. They will now sleep side by side. I am telling you the real truth.

The beds and bunks they have supplied there are not even enough, and some are not working. So in one room you see over 60 people sleeping there. In our correctional facilities all around this country, those are poor people. A rich man will not be found there. That is why digitalization will work for the poor. It will not solve the problem, but it will work for the poor.

Why? Because in this case now, if I committed a crime, and according to the law, I will stay in prison for five months, my case will be duly

registered by the stipulated agencies and scheduled appropriately to the courts.

Some courts don't have what they call court scheduling. So some people don't even know when the judge is supposed to see them. If the judge decides to travel, the lawyers will not know that the judge is traveling. They will still go to court and not find the judge there.

If the courts are digitized, you will know that if a particular case is supposed to last for two months, three months, he will spend only three months. There's a case that one of our partners helped to bring out the young man. What happened? The young man said he resigned from where he was working and told the boss he's not interested in working again.

The boss accused him of stealing his thing and arrested him. That guy stayed over ten months. Young man, young boy.

There's one that we handled too, an old man of 92 years. Our pro bono lawyers are the ones that brought the man out, he could not remember anything.

Those are poor people that our solutions will better their lives so that in cases where they are unduly arrested, digital services can work for them. It can speed up access to justice for them. It can ensure that they appear before a Judge on time and that the minute they are apprehended, before they are taken into a correctional facility, they must see a Judge, you must appear before a court. I'm even talking about the correctional centres, I've not talked about other prosecuting agencies. That's where the police, ICPC, EFCC, all these are not counted among those ones. All these ones I've given to you, 70-80 percent are just correctional centres. We don't even have the data to know how many persons the police are holding and are yet to be reprimanded in prison.

The minute your case has been tried, you stand a chance of either getting a bail. And,

sometimes, the bail cost are very high, like the ones for the minors who were arrested during the end bad governance protest and were asked to bring millions of naira and shorty from public service or thereabout for bail, less than ten years old children.

Okay. If we say we want to start building a digital system now, how many years do you think Nigeria can achieve that?

Now, let me tell you. Cut the cost of governance, that's the truth. We had an instance, we just finished our access to justice parley and PPDC are proposing ten years because it's a process that even the judges have to learn, continuous training for them to know how to use that system because they've been writing all their lives. Some have worked as judges for more than thirty years. Some of them have developed sicknesses. The number of cases they can handle in a day cannot be more than five with manual systems. Some of these judges are overwhelmed with cases. Like in the FCT that has over 130 courts, they only have less than five digital courts.

Even if PPDC has the resources which of course we do not. It's going to take at least five years for them to be gradually absorbed into the system. It has to even take a process to trust the system because what we have is an AI transcriber system that takes proceedings at the courts. So, instead of the judges after writing and sending to their clerks to ensure that it's typed out - some of the clerks, it takes them about 14 days to type one case and send it to the Judge. But, this system allows you to instantly transcribe and the clerk can sit down there if they want to edit anything and so. It's either printed into PDF or Word format. It's then stored and with our software it takes less than 4 minutes. What's the cost of doing this? Between 30-35 million naira to digitise a court

So, Ma you were talking about all sectors but, we observe you've shifted your words to courts.

Yes, I worked in a court but, I wanted to take that as an example to give you a footprint as to what the cost could be generally on all sectors. Now, in Kaduna, they are currently digitizing their procurement system using our procurement portal seamlessly and they've been able to attract donor resources to that, because when the donors see that you are working, they will support. Kaduna absorbed millions of naira to optimize their procurement portal and that was done initially at no cost by PPDC, with support from MacArthur Foundation.

So, if at that instance, are we even getting the political will to access some of these changes? These are some of the things donors are worried about. I'm putting money into something and I'm not seeing results. Will I still keep putting money there? Political will means the government is ready to absorb the change, the government sees that this is working and even if support from the donors is there, the government can still take up some of the responsibilities because the truth is, we cannot be overdependent on donors. Yet, we give money to contractors that we can't find.

You talk about health care, there are lots of inventions, managing health care databases, it is only a few hospitals that can access that. Others still use manuals. The money might be much but, I feel and believe that we can be able to do that if we have transparent leaders. We can achieve it, we don't need to source for money from anywhere. We just need to be more accountable, accountability in the sense of access to information. Let's know that this amount of money was released to a particular contractor and who the contractor is, so he can be held responsible. Compare what other countries are doing to hold their leaders accountable. We must hold the government to account. If you want the citizens to be loyal, what have you also done to show that you are also loyal to the country?

I would love to wrap up this question with this.

How many unemployed Nigerians do we have? If you check the database of Nigerians that have internet access, it is growing daily. Go to our universities, you will see more of our young chaps reading technology-driven courses. That is why these developed countries are coming to pick up our talents frequently, the Japa syndrome keeps getting momentum. They are not seeing reward for their talents or but they are getting better appreciation outside the country.

Go to most countries, you will see Nigerians at the top. We just launched our software and it was young guys that just finished from the university and still serving with the NYSC that developed the software for us. So, Nigeria is blessed with talents and intellectuals with a never say die spirit. But, the government is not utilising these talents wisely. That's the reason you will see they will shift their attention and engage in illegal processes. They end up being arrested and kept in prison and this talent is gone. So, this problem is multisectoral and it's a call for emergency.

Does lack of advocacy, disrespect for human rights, corruption and lack of freedom of speech have an impact on donors changing strategies in supporting Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)?

Donor money is business money. If you are a businessman, you only put your money where it works for you. They may come in the form of grants but they are business money. It is even difficult to waste donor's money because for us in the sector, there are structures for every penny spent, you must show results. Donors will pull out if they are not getting results for their money. CSOs won't have the money to even operate and sustain their work.

Do you think this could be intentional from the government?

Well, I can't say if it's intentional but, the truth is,

when these donors move away from issues about governance, it affects our sustainability. You see twitter ban, arrest of journalists carrying out investigative journalism to find out issues about the government is shrinking the civic space, people can no longer engage or demand from the government.

Most importantly, the resources to do the work is also shrinking because top donors that fund CSOs for advocacy, governance, promoting transparency and accountability are now looking in the direction of AI Strategy. They feel that it will have a more direct impact on the citizens, if they are trained on how to use AI and the internet to engage and acquire skills. These will give them the results they seek. The political will to sustain these donors is low. If I were a donor, I would do the same thing because I need results to show value for my money. That it is a grant does not mean it's free money that should be thrown everywhere. Bring back results because the donors are also accountable to another set of persons.

Notwithstanding, like I said, do we actually need donors? All we need is accountability and good governance. With the available resources, the government can make leadership work for everybody, and make development more sustainable. And, even working with the CSOs will help the government better. A body like the PPDC that has structures across the country can be helpful. CSOs have a wider reach that can help the government spread its impact and provide prompt information on government interventions in those communities. So, it's important that the government tries to make the space open. Let's get on the dialogue table than arrest or shutting down the internet or putting surveillance on where it's not supposed to be. Surveillance should go to the terrorists. Let's put our resources where it will work, partner with the civil society, partner with donor agencies for Nigeria to work.

Final word, do you have an advice for the

government?

Like I mentioned lastly, Nigerians are loyal and hardworking. There are things they can bring into this country. The country is also blessed with natural resources and our population growth is an advantage to us, the way China's own is to them. We need sustainable long term strategies, action plans, even in the event of different political parties succeeding the other. We want to see that a particular sector or selected sectors are given high concentration for four years to develop before switching to others on the same four year basis. Strict monitoring should also be employed in this. It will chunk out businesses, ideas, innovations, researches, a lot will come out of it that can fill into other sectors. This is how we should keep spreading to other sectors till we start getting that positive change we seek for.

It's time for us to be strategic in our approach and in the next ten, twenty or maximum thirty years, every sector in the country would have at least fifty percent upgraded.

Sack ineffective public servants and stop letting them stay years, collecting salaries and doing little or nothing or send them on training to learn and impact the society. The recent ministerial reshuffle by the President earned him some trust by Nigerians that he's actually working for the people.

The mandate should be led by the people, it's a country strategy. Every incoming government or ruling political party must follow the mandate. Go and study how China got to where they are. It is not about the leadership or ruling government but, strategy. You cannot solve all the problems in four years but, you can leave a mark for others to transcend.

Nigeria is about more than ten countries in one, it will be difficult for any government to say it wants to handle everything at once. Focusing on two or three sectors does not entail others will

be entirely abandoned. It's just to chunk our efforts to ensure that these concentrated sectors work, like schools under the education sector - to ensure that teachers are well trained and paid. We've lost talented Nigerians to other countries where they go and become champions. Even with our failing education system, Nigerians still come out best wherever they go. Even technical schools no longer exist in the country. You will hardly see one. This is where industrialisation is supposed to be birthed but, they are already fading out.

Nigerians are ready to work, it is because there are no places to work or lack of the right environment that's making them turn to crime or illegal activities.

My recommendation for the government is, if we have that action plan or pathway, give it fifty years, we will be better and proud. The ones that have Japa will come back.

Thank you for your time.

You are welcome.

The Way Forward for Peace Is To Engage Nigerians - Organiser, Peace Achievers Award



Organiser of the Peace Achievers Award has emphasized on the increased rate of violence and instability in the country, noting that the way forward is to ensure that Nigerians are engaged, especially, considering the statistics of unemployed Nigerians.

Amb. Kingsley Amafibe said the objective of the Peace Achievers project is to collaborate with the government to enhance an atmosphere of

peace, through advocacy.

He added that this year's event, the 14th Edition aims at peace, putting into perspective the current state of the country.

During the award ceremony, individuals and corporate bodies were honoured for their socio-economic development impacts. Others were presented with awards for their humanitarian interventions for sustainable peace in communities across Nigeria.

One of the awardees, Dr. Victor Enebeli advised the Nigerian government to convene a national conference based on homegrown ideas that will lead to a practical peace plan.

Dr. Enebeli, Director of Studies at the Mary Odili Judicial Institute, Port Harcourt, urged the government not to rely on ideas developed nations for its policies..

"What Nigerian leaders fail to realize is that we are very unique set of people with different cultures and backgrounds, he said.

"It is a country of 774 local government areas. The government need to connect with the people, talk to them and get workable solutions.

"Our people should have representative at the grassroots that will attend this National conference. These representative should come from the 774 local government, with this they can explain to the government what their people want and get a take back after the conference.

"The National Assembly should draft a law that is unique to the various interest in Nigeria instead of importing solutions from outside. It is only when what the people want can be understood that is when workable law can come in. The national Assembly should understand the uniqueness of these problems", he stated.

Some notable Nigerians who made this year's Peace Achievers Award include Zamfara State

Governor, Dauda Lawal, Dr Linus Okorie, President, GOTNI Leadership Centre, Dr Mohammed Dahiru, Presidential Implementation Committee on Technology Transfer(PICTT)/Chairman Nigeria –Czech Republic Trade and Investment Council and Osahon Okunbo, Executive Director, Pipeline Infrastructure Nigeria Ltd.

Others include Mrs Nimi Briggs, CEO, NIMPAT Group, Mr Michael Bartlett-Vanderpuye, President and Group Chairman M&C Group Global, Amb. Victoria Olufunke Olatunde, Founder, Victoria Olatunde Foundation, Mr Hero Usiagwu, MD/CEO, Zioncity Innovation Services and Mr Felix Achibiri, Executive Chairman, DFC Holdings Ltd, among others.

Amb. Imagine urged stakeholders in various sectors of the nation's economy to support peace initiatives that create opportunities for Nigerians.

One of the key points of the event was the presentation of the '100 Most Notable Business Executive & Leadership Magazine and 'The Rise of African Fashion Designers & Lifestyle' by Amb. Kingsley Amafibe.

My Aspirations For "Dhies Woman" Is To Spark Change and Be A Movement for Women



On our coverage of the Women In

Leadership and Entrepreneurship Conference (WOILEN 2024), held at the Mariam Babangida International Women Development Centre, we met Emmanuella , full of energy, while busy interacting with buyers. We decided to speak with her to tell us more about her business and how she ventured into it. Below were the interactions we had. Excerpts:

Can you please introduce yourself?

My name is Emmannuella, I'm the creative force behind Dhies Woman. I'm a fashion designer with a passion for creating elegant, timeless pieces that celebrate individuality and self-expression. Dhies Woman is more than a brand— it's a movement for women who embrace sophistication, strength, and uniqueness.

What led you into establishing 'Dhies Woman' as a business?

Fashion has always been my passion. I started Dhies Woman to bring my creative vision to life. Majorly, it all began with a desire to stand out from the crowd, from a tender age. I have never been pleased with what I get. So, I decided to create my own TREND - market for versatile, high-quality, and luxurious, yet, accessible pieces. My goal is to redefine fashion by offering designs that empower women to feel confident and beautiful, no matter the occasion.

What do you aim to achieve?

Beyond redefining style, I aim to make Dhies Woman a household name, synonymous with empowerment, innovation, and inclusivity. My goal is to use fashion as a tool to inspire confidence, celebrate diversity, and create meaningful connections between women from all walks of life.

I also envision Dhies Woman becoming a platform for mentorship, uplifting aspiring designers, and fostering a community where art, culture, and creativity thrive. By integrating sustainable practices, I aim to minimize our environmental impact while crafting timeless pieces that resonate deeply with our customers.

Ultimately, I aspire for Dhies Woman to be more than a fashion brand—it should be a movement that sparks change, empowers individuals, and elevates the conversation around style, self-expression, and purpose.

What impact have you had?

Dhies Woman has already begun making its mark by inspiring confidence in our clients and redefining luxury with custom-made, made-to-order designs. Through our collections, we've not only elevated personal style but also contributed to creating a culture of mindful fashion. Every stitch is made with love and precision, ensuring our customers feel unique and valued.

What's your projection for your business in the next ten years?

In the next decade, I envision Dhies Woman expanding into an internationally recognized brand, setting trends while staying true to our roots. I see us contributing more to sustainable fashion, hosting exclusive runway events, and being a global voice for empowering women through style and innovation.

Thank you for the session with us.

It's a pleasure.

Stakeholders Drum Support For Women Empowerment



The Nigerian government has been urged to provide more support for empowerment to improve the lives of women in the country.

At a conference on Thursday 28th November, 2024, aimed at connecting and inspiring women, convener, Stella George said women need support to access fund and information in growing their businesses.

She added that with more support, it would be sustainable in growing the society.

"We expect more collaboration, more synergy, more support for the women. We want to see that their businesses thrive in the era of sustainability, she said.

Former Women Affairs Minister, Aisha Ismail encouraged women to strive and excel in elective or appointed positions to assist other women.

Mrs. Ismail said women should get themselves exposed to business opportunities, not just at the community level but, at the national level, Africa and international; adding that "without us in trade, there won't be any trading".

"If we cannot empower ourselves, then, who will do it for us? We need to start thinking differently", she stated.

Dr. Adebayo Benjamin Laniyi, the Pioneer Mandate Secretary, Women and Children Affairs, FCTA said women are primed to be distinct, an inspiration and drivers of change.

"You are the difference the world will see because, you become the difference you want to see. It begins with you being the original girl you were born to be, being the original woman by calling.



"You are called to embrace your identity and become a reference, not just for history but, your own story", Dr. Laniyi stated.

She continued by revealing that a woman's agenda is about impacting the world and said that when a woman is being invested in, it rubs off on the community. "And when you invest in the society, you invest in legacy", she enumerated.

While adding that the renewed hope initiative for women, through Her Excellency, Nigeria's First Lady, Sen. Oluremi Tinubu is one that has impacted women in agriculture, digital interest and women in space of enterprise trade grants, she said the initiative is working, not as a political drive but, as an agenda for every woman with impact.

Efosa Onyezebe, the Executive Director, Misedi Empowerment Initiative for Africa, while speaking on the Entrepreneurship: A Gateway to Women Empowerment, said women can be exporters in different categories and must not be one of the famous, which is, having a physical product and taking it to another country.

"You can be a commodity export vendor, one of the traditional ways. Another way is to become

an export agent, facilitating trade between two entities - the buyer and seller", she said.

Mrs. Onyezebe emphasized on women placing more value on relationship and network, describing the two as great assets.

"Your network is your networth. That is money for you, that is what some people do with their lives. They facilitate contact relationship and earn a fee for it", Onyezebe added.

She encouraged women not to think that what they see as local can't exported internationally.

Financial support of a hundred thousand naira each were given to some women at the conference.

Convener, Stella George said the Women In Leadership and Entrepreneurship Conference (WOILEN) was put together to empower and support women in their business endeavours.

The theme for this year's event is Empowered to Lead, Inspired to Succeed: Women Shaping the Future.

CIOB Exhibition Will Propel Nigeria's Economic Growth – Group Head



The Chartered Institute of Builders (CIOB) has said that its upcoming award, valedictory and exhibition is aimed at coming up with innovative ideas and business models that will "exponentially" propel the growth of the Nigerian economy.

Group Head, Bldr. Onabekun Isiaka Adekunle said the 2025 CIOB NIGERIA HUB MEET 2.0 is the second edition, just like an annual

conference for other professionals locally and foreign to promote serving stakeholders in the built environment with reputable awards, celebrate doyens in the industry, both related and non related, hence they are in the built environment.

"No economy in the world can do without the built environment's contributions, as we have here in Nigeria, for Renewed Hope Agenda that supports infrastructural development of the country, to compete with the likes of Dubai, Saudi Arabia and China and others ", Bldr. Adekunle said.

"As the meet gets closer, Nigeria's economic future looks brighter, especially with sustainability call to action. Policymakers are now poised to implement reforms, harness technological advancements, and foster international collaboration. The stage is thus set for country's economic revival – driven by coordinated policy implementation and a shared vision for prosperity, strategic partnership and collaboration.

The Meet also aims to showcase innovative ideas and construction technologies for the public to transform circularity and digitalization of the sector, importantly creating networks of business continuity.

Dignitaries expected at the Meet include the Nigerian President, Bola Tinubu, the Ministers of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Housing, and Works. Others include Royal Fathers, Doyen of Construction Industries that include Julius Berger Nig Plc, Development Control of the FCT and other Real Estate Monguls and VIPS in the country.

CIOB NIGERIA HUB is a registered organization in Nigeria under CAMA LAW 2020 to promote professionalism in the built environment sphere of Nigeria and international. Its ethical values support sustainable development for professionals, corporate organizations and other

interested parties in the public domain to be a leading force in the sector. It represents quality and standards that create diversity, equity and inclusion in its deliverables.

Airline Operators Clamours for Confirmation of Capt. Najomo as DG NCCA



Capt. Najomo (Right)

Airline Operators of Nigeria (AON) called for the confirmation of Captain Chris Najomo as Director General of the Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA).

Calls for his confirmation is an endorsement of the quality regulation he has engineered at the NCAA, according to AON. They described the regulations as the best in the world.

Spokesman of the body, and chairman, United Nigeria Airlines, Prof. Obiora Okonkwo said the NCAA under the acting leadership of Capt. Najomo is safety centric, without stifling airlines to stunted growth.

Prof. Obiora revealed this on Wednesday 20th November, 2024, at the maiden International Air Transport Conference, organised by the World United Consumer Organization.

He AON members have experienced an ease of doing business climate never experienced in the industry previously but, without compromising safety and security.

Prof. Obiorah acknowledged the simplified

certification processes, renewed zeal among well-motivated staff following prioritisation of staff welfare, and the absence of bureaucratic red tape that hitherto plagued regulation.



Allen Onyema (left) and Prof. Tawfiq (Right).

Chairman of Air Peace and the vice president, AON, Allen Onyema said Capt. Najomo has zero tolerance for anything unsafe in the industry.

He said his promotion of the ease of doing business doesn't mean he tolerates unsafe practices by any airline.

In his brief address during the conference, Capt. Najomo emphasised that the NCAA conducts surveillance checks on all the airline's operators.

The acting D-G urged stakeholders in the industry to prioritise strengthening financial frameworks, which according to him, is key in the growth of African aviation.

Najomo identified key strategies like enhancing regional connectivity, fostering innovation, and building capacity for the sector's growth. Collaborative efforts for sustainability are also essential to realising the industry's full potential, according to Najomo.

He pointed out that Africa's aviation sector faces significant financial hurdles that hinder its growth.

"The perception of risk remains a significant barrier to investment in African aviation. We

must establish regulatory frameworks that enhance transparency and predictability for financiers and lessors to operate confidently", Najomo said.

He further emphasised fostering public-private partnerships to address challenges and unlock investment for infrastructure expansion across the continent, saying that improving regional connectivity is, therefore, a priority for driving intra-African trade and tourism.

"Initiatives like SAATM must be supported to reduce operational costs and improve access to underserved routes. This strategy would enable the seamless movement of people and goods, significantly boosting economic integration. Furthermore, it aligns with the objectives of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Promoting innovation and technology in the aviation sector is critical, Najomo continued, particularly as Africa aims to align with global standards. He encouraged stakeholders to adopt digitalised operations and green energy solutions to enhance efficiency and sustainability.

"From modernising systems to deploying eco-friendly technologies, innovation must be central to our long-term strategy," he stated.

Rights Group Seeks to Educate Nigerians on Police Act 2020



The Rule of Law and Empowerment Initiative, on Thursday 25th November, 2025, held a media

town hall meeting to “unpack the critical provisions of the Police Act 2020 and its innovations, and to explore the role of the media in fostering responsible and rights-based reporting on sensitive issues like arrests, stop-and-search, and profiling.

The group also known as Partners West Africa Nigeria (PWAN), organised the gathering to educate the public, specifically media organizations about the Police Act and its impact on police-citizen interactions, and media reporting.

“This is an important initiative to ensure that both the public and the media understand their rights and responsibilities under the new law and the expected conduct of police officers”, Kemi Okenyodo, the Executive Director of the group said in her opening speech at the meeting held in the Nigerian capital, Abuja.

“This is an essential step to strengthening trust, transparency, and accountability between law enforcement and the community”, she added.

A facilitator at the function, Mr. Obiorah Nwosu said the new act, governed by fundamental principles of transparency, accountability, fairness and protection of human rights, will bring lots of insights to Nigerians.

He also said this is an opportunity to have a chat with media organisations and professional bodies to transmit information of the new Act to Nigerians, so they would know that before being arrested, there must be a warrant, unless if a crime is committed in the presence of an officer.

“The (Act) states the functions and powers of the police. The Police have the power but, absolute powers. There are guiding rules and regulations governing the work of the police, Nwosu who works with the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) said.

“A lot of Nigerians do not know about the new act and its contents, when and how to arrest, the

steps in arresting and how to carry out investigations.

“There’s a specific time to issue summon – between 06 am – 06 pm and can also be given on weekend basis and public holidays. These contents are what we are here to give to Nigerians today”, he concluded.

The Nigerian Police Act was signed on the 16th of September, 2020 by the previous administration of Ex President, Muhammadu Buhari.

PWAN with support from the UK Integrated Security Fund of the Foreign Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO) is implementing the project titled “Enhancing Police Governance: Deepening Understanding of the Police Act 2020 and Regulations Across Nigeria specifically in Kano, Plateau, Borno, Edo, Lagos, Enugu states, and the FCT. The project seeks to address critical gaps in the understanding and application of the Police Act 2020 and accompanying regulations within the Nigerian Police Force (NPF).

FG, Adamawa State Government Signs MoU to Advance Quality Health care



A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Nigerian government and the Adamawa State government has been signed to finalize the agreement on the handover and conversion of Cottage Hospital Hong, and

General Hospital Mubi into Federal Medical Centres.

In a statement issued on Monday 2nd December, 2024, by the Deputy Director, Information & PR of the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Alaba Balogun, the Minister, Prof. Ali Pate said the agreement is a statement of intent by the Ministry to improve and expand healthcare services for all Nigerians, alligning with the renewed hope agenda of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

On it's benefits, Mr. Pate, represented by the Permanent Secretary Daju Kachollom mni, enumerated that the upgrading is critical to expanding and strengthening of health services across the country.

"And with this signing, we believe, your Excellency, that this movement forward will not just be for the people of Mubi and Hong, but for the entire North East and any of our neighbouring countries", he said.

The Coordinating Minister added that the conversion to Federal Institutions will enhance the health of the citizens and beyond in line with the mandate of the Federal Ministry of Health & Social Welfare to provide quality and safe health care services.

Earlier, the Deputy Governor of Adamawa State Prof. Kaletapwa Farauta, who also chaired the official handover and signing of the MoU commended the Federal Government through the Federal Ministry of Health & Social Welfare for its foresight to upgrade the state's health facilities.

The agreement, she explained, is strategic to improving and providing quality health services to the beneficiaries, the people of Adamawa state; stressing, the initiative alligns with Governor Ahmadu Fintiri's priority of health sector.

She restated the commitment of His Excellency,

the Executive Governor of Adamawa State Ahmadu Umaru Fintiri, to providing requisite support for the health intitutions to thrive.

The State Commissioner for Health and Human Services Chief Felix Tangwami appreciated the impactful efforts of the Federal Ministry of Health & Social Welfare to enhance health care provision in Adamawa State.


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