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Magazine

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January 2025 Edition

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COP 29: Nigeria Strengthens Ties With China For Global Climate Action



Nigeria's Environment Minister signed a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on behalf of the Nigerian government, with the People's Republic of China.

Mallam Balarabe Abbas Lawal - Nigeria's Minister of Environment



You Can't Pretend In Marriage for too Long - Tolulope Ekwe



Technology on its Own Isn't Enough" - François Dubois, Siemens Energy, on Regional Collaboration, Cross-Border Energy Partnerships



ACReSAL Yobe State: Governor Buni Launches Gully Control Project

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AHMAD ABDULSAMAD

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VINLAND ARCHITECTS AND DESIGNS



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I Enjoy Anything Natural And It Let Me To Create Pure Pickers Agreement

My Aspirations For "Oliver Women" Is To Speak Change and Be A Movement for Women

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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



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

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Health Exclusive (October)

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



Prof. Nnodu is the Special Adviser to the Nigerian Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare, on SCD.



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Arc. Cecilia Atohengbe

CEO Neighbourhood Turnkey Projects

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Senator Diket Plang

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Future Focus Foundation



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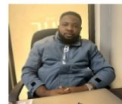
All First Ladies Must Engage To Actualize The Five Gender Bills - Hon. Foluke Osafire



Honourable Foluke Osafire

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MALLAM BALARABE ABBAS LA WAL - NIGERIA'S MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT

Nigeria Unveils Plastic Waste Vending Machines



Environment Minister Addresses Stakeholders at the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)



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ACRoSAL, Yobe State Governor Buni Launches Gully Control Project

Publishers Note

Welcome to the January Edition of Mediaage Magazine, our first 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.

Sincere 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 February, 2025.

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



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Nigeria Strengthens Ties With China For Global Climate Action

On the sidelines of the ongoing COP29, Nigeria's Honourable Minister of Environment, Malam Balarabe Abbas Lawal, participated in the High-Level Dialogue: "South-South Cooperation Promotes Sustainable Development in Developing Countries", at the invitation of the Chinese delegation.

towards climate Minister

on behalf

with the China. This accelerate innovative

shared challenges.

This

highlights South-achieving

developing can build a future for



In a significant step addressing the global crisis, the Honourable signed a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) of the Federal Government of Nigeria People's Republic of MOU aims to adopt and climate action through solutions, mutual cooperation, and expertise in combating environmental

partnership underscores Nigeria's commitment to #GreenNigeria and the importance of South collaboration in sustainable development for nations. Together, we greener, more resilient all.

Nigeria, India Working on Addressing Common Environmental Challenges

The Minister was in bilateral discussions with his Indian counterpart, Bhupender Yadav to address common challenges related to desertification and land degradation.

They discussed issues related to strengthening cooperation as members of International Alliance and issues related to Energy Access and Transition.

The conference which was held from Monday 2nd to 13th December, 2024, with 196 countries and the European Union representative closed early Saturday, with 39 decisions, including a procedural decision on drought, being adopted.

The UNCCD COP16 mission is to create awareness on global ambition and accelerate action on land and drought resilient through people centred approach.



The Minister stressed the need for India and Nigeria to work as a team to address common challenges related to desertification and land degradation for a sustainable future.

Bhupender Yadav commended Nigerian Minister for his achievements in the area of combating desertification and land degradation in Nigeria and assured him of India's support

in tackling environmental challenges in the two countries.

Environment Minister Addresses Stakeholders at the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

Minister of Environment, Balarabe Abbas Lawal, addressed stakeholders at the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP16) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), held in December in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

The minister emphasized the urgent need for collaborative efforts to combat desertification and land degradation, highlighting the impact of these issues on food security and climate change.

He urged for increased investment in sustainable land management practices and the importance of empowering local communities to participate in decision-making processes. The conference brought together representatives from various countries to share best practices and develop strategies for achieving land degradation neutrality.

Nigeria Unveils New Plastic Vending Waste Machines

Nigeria's Minister of Environment has confirmed that efforts by the government to ensure a cleaner environment and fight the threats caused by environmental pollution is yielding the desired results.

Balarabe Abbas Lawal revealed this on Wednesday 22nd January, 2025, at the unveiling of Plastic Waste Reverse Vending Machines, in Abuja, sponsored by the UNIDO project 'Promoting Sustainable Plastic Value Chains Through Circular Economy Practices'.

The Minister, represented by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry, Mahmood Kambari said the

unveiling is pivotal to waste management for the country.

He said reverse vending machines are a cutting-edge solution in waste management and they make room for individuals to recycle waste and be rewarded in return.

In 2023, the Minister, in his first meeting with environment correspondents, said the government is working on a roadmap that will help protect and clean the environment with prompt implementation of environmental projects that I line with President Bola Tinubu's renewed hope agenda. In that meeting, he said the policy will aid in ensuring the environment is clean at all times.

"Today, we take an important step in our collective fight against plastic pollution. The reverse vending machine not just a tool, but a symbol of our unwavering commitment to a cleaner, greener, and more sustainable future for Nigeria, Mr. Lawal said.

He stated that the machine is a simple, powerful technology that encourages proper waste disposal, creating a cycle of recycling, and individuals actively participating in protecting the environment.



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simple, encourages cycle of actively the

"Beyond its environmental impact, this machine promotes the concept of a circular economy, he continued.

"Instead of plastic ending up in landfills or polluting our oceans, it re-enters the production cycle, reducing the demand for new resources and minimizing our ecological footprint.

"We stand to benefit from cleaner communities, with fewer plastics littering our streets and waterways; economic opportunities where jobs are created and local industries boosted; and increased public awareness where it fosters the mindset of responsibility and sustainability, especially for future generations.

"With its unveiling, we embrace local innovation and craftsmanship, and a renewed dedication to protecting our environment," the Minister said.

Chairman of the House of Representatives' Committee on Environment, Hon. Julius Pondi, who applauded the initiative, described it as phenomenal.

While acknowledging the benefits of the initiative, Hon. Pondi urged UNIDO to work with the National Assembly on how to replicate the innovation across the country.

Nigeria Launches Decommission Plan and Environmental Remediation Strategies

The Nigerian government has revealed that it is ready to recover several abandoned project sites across the country, through a decommissioning plan and environmental remediation strategy.

Minister of Environment, Mallam Balarabe Abbas, made this known on Wednesday 22nd January, 2025, in Abuja during a one-day workshop on the review of decommissioning plans and environmental remediation strategies, adding that abandoned project sites constitute environmental hazards and degrade the value of such properties.

Mr. Abbas also said efforts made by the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Agency (NESREA) to prepare regulations for the decommissioning project underscores its collective responsibility to ensure that environmental sustainability remains at the forefront of Nigeria's national development agenda.

He further observed that the one-day workshop also represents an important step toward ensuring that industrial activities in Nigeria align with the highest standards of environmental protection and sustainability.

"You will all agree with me that decommissioning and remediation are critical aspects of sustainable resource management. Nigeria, like many nations, faces challenges in the areas of regulatory compliance, capacity building, and the availability of advanced technologies for decommissioning and remediation.

Environment Ministry Presents 2025 Budget, Defends 2024 Performance

Nigeria's Ministry of Environment, led by its Minister, Balarabe Abbas Lawal, presented the 2024 Budget Performance Report and defended its 2025 budget at the National Assembly Complex, Abuja.

The Ministry is focused on addressing key environmental challenges, including climate change, pollution, and conservation

The ministry's budget defense presentation highlighted its achievements in 2024, including efforts to promote sustainable development, protect natural resources, and address environmental degradation. The presentation also outlined the ministry's plans and priorities for 2025, which include the following:– Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation: Efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote climate resilience

- Environmental Conservation: Initiatives to protect and preserve Nigeria’s natural resources, including forests, waterways, and wildlife.
- Pollution Control and Waste Management: Programs to reduce pollution, promote sustainable waste management practices, and ensure environmental health and safety.

Environment Ministry, Agencies Clamour for Improved Budget Allocation



The Federal
Ministry of
Environment and

its agencies on Thursday 16th January, 2025, at a budget defence exercise with Nigeria's House of Representatives appealed to have their budgetary allocations for the 2025 fiscal year increased.

The ministry and its agencies—comprising the National Park Service, Environmental Health Council of Nigeria, the National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency, and the Forest Research Institute of Nigeria—reviewed their 2024 performance and outlined projections for 2025.

The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Environment, Mahmud Kambari, highlighted the ministry’s achievements while stressing that inadequate funding remains a significant challenge.

The Conservator-General of the National Park Service, Ibrahim Goni, reported 2024 expenditures, including N4.33bn for personnel, N1.03bn for overheads, and N1.95bn for capital projects, with N633.46m disbursed and utilised.

Meanwhile, the House of Representatives Committee on Environment expressed dissatisfaction over the lack of adequate funding for the Environmental Health Council of Nigeria, which they said hampers its ability to prevent disease outbreaks in the country.

The committee, chaired by Julius Pondi, who represents Burutu Federal Constituency in Delta State, criticised the hardships faced by EHCN staff, including a complete lack of salaries in 2014. Pondi questioned why the Budget Office of the Federation excluded the agency from the budget, despite the Federal Executive Council reinstating it.

The committee listened to EHCN’s Executive Director, Yakubu Mohammed, who detailed the

agency's challenges and sought their intervention. He disclosed that the council had been excluded from budgetary allocations due to a 2024 government policy discontinuing funding for regulatory health bodies. However, this policy was later reversed following extensive engagements with the Budget Office and the Minister of Health.

Mohammed emphasised the council's role in managing health emergencies, including curbing the Lassa fever epidemic across 21 states and addressing the Maiduguri flood disaster in 2024, for which the Borno State Government commended the agency.

The EHCN boss requested approval for N1.1bn for capital expenditure, N264m for overheads, and N1.7bn for personnel costs in the 2025 budget estimates.

Pondi assured Mohammed of the committee's support and promised to recommend the agency's reintegration into the budget. "We sympathise with you but are unhappy about this situation. Every agency under our oversight deserves fair and adequate access to funding," Pondi said.

Balarabe Abbas Lawal Sympathizes With Family of Late Hajara Sani, Director of Forestry, Ministry of Environment.

Minister of Environment, Balarabe Abbas Lawal, has offered his condolences to the family of Late Hajara Sani, Director of Forestry at the Federal Ministry of Environment, who died on Friday, January 17, 2025. **Pictures:**



Other Pictures:





#GreenNigeria

THISDAY AWARD, 2025.
GOVERNOR
OF THE YEAR

Congratulations

This is to express my profound congratulations to my Governor, Senator Uba Sani on being awarded the Governor of the Year by Thisday/Arise TV. This esteemed recognition reflects your impactful leadership and unwavering dedication to the progress and prosperity of Kaduna State. Your exemplary service continues to inspire us all. Once again,

Congratulations!



BALARABE ABBAS LAWAL
HONORABLE MINISTER
FEDERAL MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT

Environment Minister Assures UNIDO On Circular Economy

Nigeria's Minister of Environment has assured the United Nation Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) of its commitment towards circular economy in management of plastic waste in Nigeria.

In a statement issued on the 26th January, 2026, by the Director, Press for the Ministry, Balarabe Abbas Lawal revealed this at the unveiling of Plastic Revised Vending Machine in Abuja, aimed to kick-starting the fight against plastic pollution nation-wide.

Represented by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry, Mahmood Kambari, Balarabe said the vending machines are a cutting-edge solutions in waste management where individuals deposit bottles and other recyclable materials and earned financial reward in returns.

He also noted that beyond the environmental impact, the vending machine will promote the concept of circular economy for cleaner communities and economic opportunities for the citizens.

He disclosed that the machine was donated to the National Assembly in order to strengthen partnership and effective collaboration between the two arms of government and members being the representative of all Nigerians.

Members urged members to donate similar machines to their constituencies to create jobs for youth and safeguard their environment.

The Chairman, House Committee on Environment, Hon. Julius Pondi and his

members have pledged their unalloyed support toward the effective management of the Machine.

UNIDO's National Programm Officer, Dr. Osuji Oti in his goodwill message stated that the vending machine is a Nigeria's made product and urged the scale-up of the project for the effective management of plastic waste in country.

The Director of Pollution Control and Environmental Health, Engr. Bahijahtu Abubakar who represented the Permanent Secretary in her opening remarks thanked the UNIDO for supporting the Ministry in combating plastic waste in Nigeria.

She also stated that the NASS Complex was carefully and deliberately chosen for the unveiling being the symbol of Unity as well as members being the full representatives of all Nigerians.

Mr. Emeka Okechukwu from ecobarter Technologies demonstrated the functionality of the plastic vending machine during the official ceremony.

Balarabe Abbas Lawal Honoured As Environment Impact Person of the Year

Environment Minister, Balarabe Abbas Lawal was recently recognised as the Environment Impact of the Year, for redefining environmental governance in Nigeria with commendable innovation to combat climate change-induced challenges.

He was given an award by Leadership Group, publishers of Leadership Newspaper.

"This is a great honour for me. And I'm

thrilled. It's important to me, the Minister said.

"I consider it a great privilege. I am just doing what I need to do to fix the damage to our environment. We want to write the wrongs and give Nigerians a better living environment.

"That's why we keep telling everyone to keep their environment clean to be safe", Mr. Abbas Lawal said while receiving the award in his office in Abuja.

He expressed concern over the alarming environmental pollution, land degradation and deforestation that have caused many disasters, including deadly flooding across the country. "Nigeria has the worst forest cover in the world now", he said.

The minimum required for forest cover is 25 per cent for all nations.

"In Nigeria now, as I'm talking to you, you have 3.7%. Because of illegal logging, because the Chinese have their wood, but they come and take our wood and go home", he stated.

Lawal said he is driven by a passion for restoring the nation's environment with the proper regulatory framework in partnership with various stakeholders.

The minister said the President Bola Tinubu-led government is trying to build as many trees as possible to prevent the desert from coming in. Particularly from the northern part of the country; one could see that significant threat to humanity, he said, a reason he is inviting relevant stakeholders in the environment industry and the media to come in strongly and support the government.

"We are providing a lot in our budget this year and next year. In addition, as I explained to the team that came here, we will try to work with these people who are our leaders. I don't think this day is bigger than you," he stated.

Ogoni Cleanup, a long-stalled project in Nigeria's Delta region, gained unprecedented momentum under Lawal's stewardship. He earned widespread community support by engaging local stakeholders and launching tangible projects such as potable water schemes and the Centre for Excellence for Environmental Remediation in Wiiyaakara.

Director of LEADERSHIP Conference, Mr Abraham Nda-Isaiah, said that the initiative is a testament to the minister's commitment to restoring degraded environments and improving the lives of those most affected.



BALARABE ABBAS LAWAL
HONORABLE MINISTER
FEDERAL MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT

Productive Tips for A Successful 2025

WITH the new year just starting, I'm almost certain you desire a very productive and successful year. In the last few months of 2024, I have consciously taken a keen note on things I do that makes my day productive. Two patterns seem to have formed, which set the tone of the day.

For a very productive day a well defined routine is in play and for less productive days an undefined routine also plays out. With the new year just starting, developing a routine would be helpful for a more productive and successful day.



I am sharing simple tips that have helped me to be productive in the year 2024 which I intend to

improve on for a more successful 2025.

1. Have a consistent wake up Time

Why It Matters: A consistent wake-up time aligns your body's internal clock, improving sleep quality and energy levels.

Action Tip: Choose a realistic wake-up time and stick to it, even on weekends.

2. Hydrate First Thing in the Morning:

Why It Matters: After 6–8 hours of sleep, your body needs hydration to kick-start metabolism and flush out toxins. Drinking warm or room temperature water is more beneficial to the body than cold water. Drinking water first thing in the

morning also helps with easy bowel movement.

Action Tip: Drink a glass of warm water with a slice of lemon or a teaspoon of Apple cider.

3. Move Your Body

Why It Matters: Gentle morning exercises improve circulation, release endorphins (Endorphins are hormones that the body produces to reduce pain, improve mood, and increase feelings of well-being) ,awaken your muscles and improve your mental abilities.

Action Tip: Try Dancing, stretching, or a 15-minute walk to activate your body.

4. Eat a Nutrient-Rich Breakfast

Why It Matters: A balanced breakfast fuels your brain and body for the day ahead. Missing out on breakfast slows you down and drains your energy levels.

Action Tip: Include protein (like eggs), complex carbs (like Acha), and healthy fats (like avocado).

5. Practice Mindfulness or Gratitude

Why It Matters: Focusing on positivity and mindfulness reduces stress and increases clarity.

"Gratitude is a powerful catalyst for happiness. It's the spark that lights a fire of joy in your soul."

– Amy Collett

Action Tip: Spend 5 minutes journaling what you're grateful for or meditating.

6. Plan Your Day

Why It Matters: Knowing your priorities helps you stay productive and focused.

Action Tip: Write down 3 main tasks you want to accomplish and review your schedule.

7. Limit Screen Time

Why It Matters: Jumping straight into emails or social media can increase stress and distract you.

Action Tip: Avoid screens for the first 30 minutes after waking up.

8. Declare Positive Affirmation

Why It Matters: Starting your day with positivity helps in making you confident and motivated throughout the day.

Action Tip: Repeat a mantra like, "I am focused, productive and energized to achieve my goals today."

Conclusion: I formed this habit during the last four months of 2024 and I accomplished more than the previous months of the year.

Adopting these morning habits doesn't have to be overwhelming. Start by incorporating one or two and build your way up. A little effort in the morning can lead to big rewards for your energy, focus, and overall health throughout the day and eventually throughout the year.

Be More Productive and Accomplish More in 2025.

Foluke Olajide,

Mother Nature.

Social Media Pivotal to Youth Productivity – Sen. Ndume NIGERIAN Senator, Ali Ndume has said that social media is pivotal to the productivity of youth in the country.

He also said the Nigerian Institute of Social Media Analysts (NISMA) is placed with the responsibility of improving news dissemination that will aid the growth of the country.

"Social media helps the youth to be less dependent, more futuristic", Ndume said at the 3rd Induction Ceremony, organised by the institute on Thursday 05th November, 2024, in Abuja, the Nigerian capital.

"Social media has a higher reach than



conventional media such as radio, television and print", he said.

The Borno State born Senator was also conferred with the position of a Grand Patron of the institute.

Themed "Navigating the Future: The Crucial Role of AI in the Virtual Society", he said the induction is not just timely but, transformative.

Mr. Ndume also stated that Artificial Intelligence (AI) is not only a tool but, an architect of transformation from personalized content delivery and predictive analysis to sentiment analysis and automation of interaction.

"The positive drive of AI will make the youth productive and contribute their quota in building the country", he said.

"AI is influencing industries, redefining communication's, challenging social norms. In the realm of social media.

"For us in Nigeria where social media is catalysts for communication and advocacy, you are expected to harness AI to drive engagement, innovation and social needs", the Senator added.

Provost of the Nigerian Police School of Public Relations, Dr. Emmanuel CS Ojukwu, said artificial intelligence is rapidly evolving digital

intelligence, adding that AI is no longer a distant concept confined to sci-fi novels; "it is a reality, a tool and, indeed, a partner in how we analyze, create, and interact within the virtual world".

Ojukwu also said the role of social media analysts is more significant than ever and every click, post and interaction generates valuable data that reflects societal behaviors, preferences and aspirations. He encouraged the inductees to be touch bearers of the institute.

"As you take your your place in this distinguished body, you are not only becoming part of a professional network, you are also committing to excellence, innovation and integrity in this digital age.

"You are the analyst, strategist and pioneers who will navigate the uncharted territories of AI in our virtual society", he enumerated.

Health Group Holds Stakeholders Engagement on Measles Rubella Advocacy

MEASLES is highly contagious and is one of the endemic diseases in Nigeria. It affects all age groups but, the most is the group between zero to five years. Though, preventable through vaccine against outbreak of the disease, measles infection can also be controlled.

Measles and Rubella are serious diseases with adverse effects, especially on children.

Measles can lead to severe complications like brain swelling, fever, rashes and pneumonia. In some cases, it can lead to death.

While Rubella poses significant risks, including birth defects when contracted during pregnancy, the MR vaccine offers effective solutions to prevent these diseases and protect infants and children.

The introduction of the MR vaccine in Nigeria is

pivotal and requires unlimited advocacy, community engagement, not leaving out government backing. This is to ensure that every child, especially in rural communities, receives intervention.

At a Stakeholders' Meeting on the Introduction of the Measles-Rubella (MR) Vaccine in Nigeria, organised by the Centre for Well-being & Integrated Nutrition Solutions (C-WINS), in the Nigerian capital, Abuja, were experts in the health sector who gave varying views of the disease.

The objective of the stakeholders engagement aims at creating a common understanding of



what measles rubella advocacy project entails. Other objectives include forging a robust

engagement of key stakeholders, clarifying assigned deliverables of grantees, sharing and joint review of work plans identifying specific activities requiring collaboration or implementation, presentation on funds disbursement procedures, and establishing schedules for consultative meetings.

Lukman Ismaila from the Nigeria Center for Disease Control (NCDC) said annually, not less than ten thousand cases of measles are reported. Therefore, the need "to rise and prevent the continuous outbreak" of the disease in the country is imperative.

He said the best and affordable way for measles prevention is by ensuring that everyone takes the vaccine.

"That is why this project is important. What we

are saying is to take the campaign to the community level and ensure that everyone is aware of what measles entails, and aware of the importance of taking the vaccine, he said while speaking with newsmen.

"At the NCDC, we consider ourselves to be part of this project, so that everyone will be aware of measles infection and vaccination. They can present themselves when the time for mass campaign begins", he stated.

While making his presentation at the engagement, he revealed that the outbreak of measles differs across regions in the country, with some facing more of it than the other. The factor responsible for this, he stated is vaccine acceptance.

However, he enumerated that there are lots of interventions provided by the NCDC. One of such interventions he said is to ensure that all public officials in the country, from the federal to local communities, must have the skill and capacity to respond to measles outbreak.

"We are training and retraining public officials at the national, state and local government levels, to make sure that once the outbreak occurs in their communities, they are able to control it.

"Even before the outbreak, they should know what they need to put together and prevent the outbreak", he stated.

Medical doctor and public health development worker, Dr Nihilola Mabogunje said the project revolves around advocacy for measles and rubella vaccine, also, for the rubella component to be added to measles vaccine.

Inspired by the understanding that many are yet to know what rubella is and the effects it has on mothers and unborn babies, she said a situation where no child will be left behind, irrespective of location, must be imbibed. "No child must be left unvaccinated", she stressed.

On call for action, she emphasised on total adherence to vaccination. "Vaccine must be routinized. Mothers should go to the facilities and get their children vaccinated at the appropriate time", Dr. Mabogunje posited.

Barr. Hauwa, representing Wives of Nigeria Governors also emphasized on sensitising local communities on the need for parents and mothers to immunize their children against measles and rubella infection. She added that traditional leaders should be engaged, including wives of local government chairmen, to ensure that no child is left unvaccinated.

Dr. Mohammed Leke spoke on role of the Nigerian Health Sector Reform Coalition (NHSRO). Being the Chairman of the coalition that constitutes major CSOs and NGOs in the health sector, and other professional health associations, he said the body is a perfect fit for the project.

According to him, with members and affiliates across the country, provides a viable option on which the project can build its advocacy to ensure that the MR vaccine is an uptake, by the last quarter of 2025.

Dr. Kenneth Onome Adagba, a consultant and public health physician, with the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, stressed that ministry is fully involved with the project.

He stated that the Coordinating Minister, Prof. Muhammad Ali Pate has ensured that all that is required for the initiative to be implemented is put in place. He added that the Ministry is working with the NCDC to ensure that outbreak of measles is prevented or attended to.

World Bank, Nigeria Disburses Funds to Plateau Communities to Boost Climate Resilience and Agricultural Yields

THE World Bank and the Nigerian government has began the disbursement of funds to 140 communities across the 17 Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Plateau State to help tackle climate change and boost agricultural yields.

Country Director of World Bank in Nigeria said the pilot scheme of the project would start with ten communities, and the funds will be disbursed through the World Bank's Financed Agro-Climate Resilience in Semi-Arid Landscape (ACReSAL) project.



“As you know, desertification and climate change are already threatening agriculture, which is a key source of livelihood of the people of Plateau”, Ndiame Diop said on Thursday, January 16, 2025, in Jos, the state capital, during the formal disbursement of the funds to the benefiting communities.

According to him, the initiative is part of the Community Revolving Fund (CRF) under the ACReSAL project.

“This investment is part of ACReSAL complements, a range of investments around land and water management within the comprehensive framework around a 10-year watershed management plan”, the Country Director said.

Diop also said that the CRF, unlike a grant, will operate as a loan program designed to support community groups in implementing community climate-resilient initiatives.

“This financial support is specifically targeted

toward ACReSAL registered Community Interest Groups across the state in targeted watershed”, he stated.

He also hinted at the provision of 20 tractors and other farming inputs to the state as part of the project initiative aimed at tackling poverty and promoting food security in the state.

Governor of the state, Caleb Mutfwang commended the World Bank for the choice of Plateau State to implement the project, particularly in tackling climate change and promoting dry-season farming.

“No doubt, (it) would empower local communities in the state to implement innovative and crucial strategies toward addressing climate change and ensuring food security in the state”, he said.

He warned the beneficiaries to ensure good use of the funds, adding that anyone caught violating the rules of engagement will attract sanctions.

“We will make sure we audit every project and ensure that we are on the road to success”, he said.

“The first rule is that this is money you will pay back, so take that into your mind and I will charge the men in these groups not to marry additional wives.

Plateau governor testing running One of the tractors.

“You are the first fruits. You are the first born of this scheme. If you succeed, it means that the story of poverty on the Plateau will turn around.

“Today, we are taking a significant step forward by disbursing funds that will enable our farmers to invest in better farming techniques and adopt climate-smart practices.”

“I don't know how these communities were selected because, I didn't interfere. We allowed the project coordinator and his team to select

these communities based on the established criteria”, the Governor posited.

While promising strict monitoring of the project, he said the ACREsAL project is not just about funding; it entails empowering communities to adapt to climate change and thrive, despite the challenges faced.

The Community Revolving Fund, which was established as part of the ACREsAL initiative, aims to provide financial support to local farmers and agricultural cooperatives.

The Governor also announced the disbursement of over \$250,000 to various community groups across the state. This funding is expected to facilitate access to credit for farmers, enabling them to purchase necessary inputs and equipment.

Task Team Leader for the World Bank’s Agro Climatic Resilience in Semi-Arid Landscapes (ACReSAL) project, Chief Dr. Joy Iganya Agene, appealed to beneficiaries of the community revolving funds not to misuse the opportunity meant to improve their lives.

Dr. Agene emphasized the importance of responsible management and utilization of the funds provided to local communities. She highlighted that these funds are designed to support agricultural development, improve livelihoods, and foster economic stability in vulnerable areas.

However, she cautioned that mismanagement or misuse of these resources could jeopardize the project’s objectives and the future availability of funding.

“Beneficiaries must understand that these funds are not a grant but a revolving resource intended to benefit the entire community,” Dr. Agene stated.

She outlined several key responsibilities for beneficiaries, including maintaining accurate

records of fund usage, ensuring equitable access to resources, and engaging in regular community meetings to discuss fund management.

She also stressed the importance of accountability and the need for beneficiaries to report any challenges or issues they encounter in the implementation of the project.

National Project Coordinator for ACREsAL, Abdulhamid Umar emphasized on the importance of community involvement in the project.

“These funds are not just financial assistance; they represent an opportunity for communities to take charge of their agricultural futures, he said.

“By investing in local initiatives, we can build resilience against climate change and ensure food security for generations to come”, Mr. Umar enumerated.

He encouraged the communities to work collaboratively and share knowledge to maximize the benefits of the project.

The National Project Coordinator reiterated the government’s commitment to supporting agricultural development in Nigeria.

“Together, we can build a sustainable future for our farmers and ensure that they thrive in the face of adversity,” he said.

The ACREsAL project is expected to make a lasting impact on the agricultural landscape of Plateau State, paving the way for a more resilient and sustainable approach to farming.

Representatives from various farming communities expressed their gratitude for the support, highlighting the positive impact that the funds will have on their agricultural activities.

“This funding will help us improve our yields and ensure that we can feed our families and

communities,” said Mary Ndam, a local farmer and member of a cooperative.

Highlight of the occasion was the commissioning of 20 tractors to boost agricultural fields.

You Can't Pretend In Marriage for too Long - Tolulope Ekwe

Marriage is a covenant that requires two committed people to make it work. It takes more than just a celebration to sustain a marriage union, and there are things to consider before getting married. Before you get married, you must understand the commitment that you are making to your partner. Some relationships lead to marriage. But before venturing into what you will eventually enjoy (or endure) throughout your life, some vital elements of a marriage must be considered. They are included in this interview with Tolulope Ekwe. Though, a Pharmacist, she's also a marriage coach and public speaker. She's the founder of Truth Speakers, an organisation aimed at building healthy Excerpts:

Please, can we meet you?

I am Tolulope Ekwe, a Pharmacist by profession, and also a marriage and family life coach, a public speaker and author. I serve in these different areas and the goal for me is that, I realised that the health of an individual and that of the family is very important and so I talk about the health of family relationships and the health of the individual. I talk about the family because it is at the centre of the ills of the society. I talk about healthy relationships within the family because I know that is the core of what makes the society better.

Even when running the pharmacy, the name means “Optimal Health”. I know it's not all about taking medicine, what about the mind? What about the spirit of an individual? Here am I in the public speaking space, dealing with the health of communication.

I studied Pharmacy and have practised it for over 2 decades. I began counseling in Church with my husband over a decade ago, as marriage coaches and few years ago, I got certified as a family life coach with the Chartered Institute of Mentors and Coaches in Nigeria.



Motherhood made me start writing actively, I've always loved writing. I love to teach my children concepts and I realised that storytelling made a world of difference. If I told them a story from age two, they understood, grasped and retained it.

I began putting stories down and getting them published on Amazon. People started buying, we began getting reviews and it became interesting. That's where my writing came from. That was more of talent and not academic skills.

What birthed Truth Speakers Project?

It's a bit of different things. All these things I've mentioned, the public speaking part came from a long time of grief. I had lost my mum 2 days after the birth of my baby and the only way I could cope was shut down the grief part and face what was in front of me. I had a toddler, a new born, life was happening and I was running a business. But, I had to keep going. Overtime, it

takes its toll if you don't deal with emotional issues. I got support and through therapy, I was connected with a public speaking organization and it seemed I had a flair for that. You can imagine good coming out of something I could describe as evil. I began winning speech contests and discovered I was doing really well. Fast forward, I got the first place award in the Tall Tales Speech Contest of Toastmasters, at the Division level (2002).

I won different awards, about eleven in the toastmasters speech contests. That proved to me more that I have a flair for this. I began working with that and somehow, in the course of doing that, people started reaching out to me, asking for support. I've done trainings for children, summer school kind of trainings at different levels. I saw that this is a need that requires solutions for people to express themselves. I found myself being pulled in this direction.

Problems in Marriage is one of the problems we are having in our society today. Going by what is happening lately, many are scared or worried of getting married. Can you share your views with our readers on this?

I've been married for 21 years plus now. In challenging circumstances at face value. I and my husband are both firstborns in our respective families and did not have older siblings to look up to. I'm Yoruba from the south western part of Nigeria, while he's Igbo from the south east of the country. That's supposed to work against us. In terms of careers, they are really high pressured ones. He's a Doctor and I'm a Pharmacist. Initially, one may look at it and ask, is this thing going to work out? However, I would say marriage is simple but, not easy. Simple and easy are not the same thing. Many people treat marriage like it is easy. Easy is something that you don't really need to prepare for, you don't really need to know much - just enter like drinking a cup of water. But, marriage requires preparation. People need to understand what

marriage is. If you ask the average person on the road, what is marriage? You will receive different responses. People don't think about what they do. If you have something that's important and you want to do, think about it because it's important to you to succeed in that venture.

When it comes to marriage, people say "I'm old enough", "I like her", "she likes me" so they marry. And what is the basis for selection?, "He's very handsome", "he's tall", "he's dark", "he is rich" "she has hips", these are unnecessary things that don't matter much in the long run. It's like buying a bottle of coke, not because of the shape of the bottle but, the content of it. That's what it should be. So, I think that's one of the challenges of marriage. People just think they are old enough to get married but, don't think about it first.

The second challenge is, people treat with levity things that are meant to be sacred. I don't know where we got this concept of living together, doing everything together that are actually meant to be done in marriage, putting the cart before the horse. It's now very common in our communities. It's just like something that's supposed to be built on trust, you end up building with nothing, no elements of trust. Then, you begin to try and to sprinkle it with trust at the latter end. I heard recently of a popular musician whose history we all know, has been in the public domain and they are about going their separate ways. I'm thinking this guy did not sell anything different from what he is, you are the one expecting something different. He did not tell you at any time that he's now born again, he's the same person that he has always been. You chose to buy what he was selling! So, we need to understand the foundation of marriage before we start going into it.

How did you strive to understand this?

For me, I'm a person of faith but, I don't try to push that as necessary because I understand that people come from different backgrounds

and beliefs. But, I think it's important for two people to agree and believe on the same fundamentals of marriage before coming together. What do I mean? If one person believes in making a commitment and the other person makes choices based on convenience, there will be problems because the expectations of the person who believes in commitment is different from the person who thinks of convenience.

For the convenience person, marriage is not a place of convenience, there are lots of inconveniences. So, the convenience person is going to back out when challenges start showing up. The commitment person will be like no, just because things are rough does not mean you should back out. Why are you doing this? It will be a problem.

So, those foundational things are necessary. What is the foundation? Why do you want to marry? Those are the questions many need to ask themselves. I strongly believe that not everyone is meant to get married because if you don't have the right mindset, you are bound to fail. If you enter marriage with a backdoor or exit strategy or thinking if things get rough, I will just use that back door, you will use that backdoor. It's guaranteed, you will use it. Something will make you use it. So, there's so much to marriage.

On the other hand, marriage is not a trap which I think is the negative mindset many young people have. They think marriage is a romance graveyard. If you have that mindset, when you enter marriage, you will expect that and you will walk by that and it will happen. You will be proved right. So, we need to work on our mindset to make it work and we need to understand that we are responsible for the way it works out. It's not something that you get for free, you work for it. When you see old couples - hunchbacked, in their 90s, walking hand in hand, they have forgiven each other a whole lot and learnt a whole lot. They have chosen their battles and dealt with a whole lot and gained the

wisdom that they would rather be happy than be right.

Some persons draw experiences from their parents marriage, how does it affect their intended marriage?

Many times, parents don't realise this. There's role modelling when it comes to marriage. Most of us before coming into adulthood, the ideas that we have are borne out of what we saw. A lot more of what we learnt is passive learning. Those things that your father sat you down and told you, the lessons are not nearly as potent as the things that you saw him do with your mother. Those ones are much more powerful. Children that experienced an abusive marriage from their parents, may hate it but there's a strong tendency that they may re-create it. The girls who watched their mother being abused are very likely to migrate to a man who will abuse them. The boys who watched their mother abused by their father are very likely to be abusive. It happens because of passive learning because, the mentorship they have experienced is all that they know. They don't know that other one they desire. This is what they know and they learnt it daily.

Because I'm a person of faith, I believe there's a spiritual component - that you imbibe and that affects you. That's why in the christian circles, they talk of breaking curses and familiar spirits. I believe that it's the mind - whether it's in the spirit, I believe there's a mindset that needs to be worked on. What I'm saying is, if someone knows that they are coming from such a troubled background, don't be in denial. It's not wishful thinking that gets you a good marriage if you are coming from such a background. You need the support of a coach or counselor, someone that can work with you to help unlearn the learning that you have had.

How can a man convince a lady that has a not too pleasant mindset of marriage, probably because of how she saw her mum suffer in her

marriage?

There's this saying "a person convinced against their will is of the same opinion still". You don't want to convince someone into marriage, it's a long journey. You want to get them to the point where they get convinced and not be the one responsible for convincing them. It's just like as a marriage coach now, somebody comes in and says I want you to help us. We want to get married but, we have this fear. One of the things I tell them is, you need to take ownership of your journey. I'm not going to be the one responsible to make a choice because, people love that so that if anything scatters, they will say it's that woman, it's that pastor, they have someone to blame. You have to grow up, that's the reason marriage is for adults, not for children. You have to grow up and take ownership and know that you are aware of the challenges, aware that she comes from this background and that may mean she's going to be afraid or have issues trusting me because, she's afraid of trusting men generally. She has made this commitment and despite this fear, she has agreed to take this chance with me. I'm aware that it may mean any outcome can arise out of this. She's willing to take this step with me and I will walk with her until she learns to trust me. The man needs to understand that's what he's getting into, having recognised where she's coming from and know the kind of trauma she may have had, he will be like "I'm ready to show her there is another side of things". That means he's going to require more patience in his bag than normal.

It's good to understand that those background experiences really do affect us. We need to learn to navigate that space consciously rather than just passing through.

Let's go to Truth Speakers, how do you intend to grow this project?

One of the first things I'm hoping to achieve. I'm coming from a background where counselling has been in the church space. I'm so grateful to

my church and the experiences I've had there, given the opportunity to serve in this capacity. When we first went to be counselled, it was purely out of curiosity and it turned out there was a lot to learn. I realised that it's beautiful to access that inside the church, but what about outside? For over a year, I've been doing audio rooms- now LinkedIn lives- on LinkedIn where we talk about marriage and I found that globally, many are struggling with issues of marriage. So, one of the things I try to do is generic coaching, as for engaging with couples one on one, I realise I can't do it alone but I hope to get people who are willing to come in, get them trained to give us a wider reach. It's a long term project.

Marriage work is gruesome. There've been times when because of how hard things are between a couple, we had to show up at people's houses and be there till late night to prevent people from breaking each other's heads. So, it's not an easy work. Even now, I don't do a lot of one on one because the amount of work you have to do with a couple is a lot. So, part of the things we plan to do is putting out courses, materials that people can read.

My husband and I did a novel last year, which has become a best seller on Amazon. It's called Raging Waters, it's got 14 categories of best seller status across four countries on Amazon. The book is deliberately a novel so it won't be any one's story. It's a compilation of things we have picked over the years. There are bits of experiences put together in the characters. It's a simple and easy read that other marriage counselors can use. Also, by the time you get your couples to read it, that can set the basis for further conversations.

Coming to your marriage and being individuals from different regions in the country, how were you able to make your marriage work to the point of influencing others?

First, let me put a caveat - I'm not claiming that my marriage is perfect and because it worked

for me, it must work for everyone. Though, sometimes, when you listen to other people's examples, it may help. One thing I would say, before marriage, there's you as an individual. Many might want to think that what I did in my marriage, if they did it, it will work for them. It doesn't work that way. The story begins with the individuals. What are they striving to achieve? What are your values? What do you stand for? What do you know how to do? For me, I got to know God early and decided that I wanted a family life, a happy marriage. It was either a happy marriage or no marriage. I decided that I don't want to experience all the drama I use to hear about. I looked out for models of what I was looking for and they were so hard to find. I recall a couple I used to admire from a distance when I was young. I loved them so much and theirs seemed like a marriage made in heaven. But, upon closer examination, I found out it was his second marriage. The first marriage did not work out well. I was so devastated the day I heard that. I felt like what I was looking for did not really exist. But, thankfully, it does. I saw other examples that worked. This was what I wanted - a happy marriage. I wanted a loving relationship, I wanted to be married to a friend. I didn't want a rules and regulations relationship. So, I was clear on all these.

I also wanted a marriage where we could build together. This is where many young persons today want an already made man that has "hammered" (local Nigerian parlance). I didn't want that because I don't want to be part of his "furniture". I preferred us building the future together but, I knew in order to do that, it will require a great amount of sacrifice because you will start from small, which we did.

I remember when my husband had an amount of money and said to me 'my fiancée, this money can either get us chairs in the parlour or bed in the bedroom. It can't get us both'. So, I said instead of being comfortable to have chairs in the sitting room, while we lay on the ground in

the bedroom, it's better we use the money to buy a bed for the bedroom. Those who really like us will sit with us on the floor while those who can't can stay in their houses.

Listening to young persons today, I realise that these were values I had that came from home upbringing and also from an understanding that God will make us what He wants us to be. I wanted to experience the walk of faith. My husband wanted to get married early and considering what was obtainable at that time, we were considered quite young.

I think there are three things many can learn from. What many people feel is to do what they like, then when it comes to big decisions like marriage, they start seeking God. When you do that, you are late because you have not developed a relationship with God, you do not know how to perceive what He is saying to you. You don't really know how he answers, you've not understood how he talks to you. So, how will you hear him at that point? You've not trained yourself to understand how he talks. That's what I think. So, when the Bible says we should remember our creator in the days of our youth it is that it gets harder when you develop an independence and know how you sort yourself and you don't know how to depend on God. It gets harder the older you get. It's easier when you learn from your youth to trust in God as he leads.

It helped me to recognise this person as the one I would spend my life with. I asked God to guide me. The experience was that he did. I asked for a sign and God did. Also, when God speaks, you will think everything is going to be bliss. No. There was the challenge that came from being intertribal, trust is not easy across cultures. That's when you will find out that just being from a certain place is already a problem. You are just wrong before you even start. So, there were challenges across both sides.

The second thing is to build friendship which is

hardly seen in our society today. Rather, they get physical first and it's a problem. The moment you start getting intimate first, it blinds you. You can't see all the things you should be seeing, you won't have all the conversations you should be having. Everything will be closed about that. In marriage, you will get the chance to do all of these. You need to see clearly to be sure that you are going in there with the person of your choice. There are questions you ask about childhood, as friends. You get to be friends because you are not blocking everywhere with sexual desires. You get to understand how he perceives how things happen, not just what happened, how did it affect him or her? Why does he think this way? So that when you say you are in love, you are not in love with the body, the body can change. You are in love with their mind and who they are inside. Build friendship, it grows with time, time spent in different circumstances too, not just in bed and going out enjoying luxuries. Experience normal life, experience what it means to sit with just the both of you and others (siblings). Know how he reacts to his or her siblings, family, friends.

Another thing is, we are always on the phone, all the conversations these days. We are always typing, making calls. In marriage, you will live in the same house. I'm not saying they should start living with each other, I'm saying visit them in their natural habitat. Understand what they do, how they do things and reasons for these.

The last one is for them to be real. Anything you cannot do, don't act like you can. Otherwise, you will be doing it for the rest of your life and you will be miserable. There are girls who want to show that they are wife materials. They go to the guy's house, cook and wash for him so he can choose you. It's good, only if you are ready to do that for the long run. But, if you are not, don't start it. By the time you show yourself to be one way and enter the marriage to be another thing, you have changed and there will be disappointment. You can't act in marriage for

too long. So, why start with acting?

Also, one of the things I realise is people act because they are afraid of losing the other person. If they can't accept the real you now, then they would not do so later

The bonus, if you don't love you, why do you expect anyone else to love you? We have to spend more time understanding and liking ourselves. Be the prize. You are someone going places, be of value. So, there's a lot of foundational things that people don't know and if they knew better, they will do better.

How supportive can a man and woman be in building a marriage?

There's a popular marriage counselor that talks about the three types of marriage - the traditional, contemporary and kingdom marriage. You need to know which one you are getting into. I'm not saying you should choose one, I'm just saying understand the type that you are going into. If you are going into a cultural marriage, you will understand that it is a man's world and the woman is there to do the man's bidding. If you are okay with that, you can go ahead but, if you are not okay with it, then, you need to define the kind of marriage you want. The contemporary marriage is the one that is fighting against the cultural - the idea of the woman being always suppressed, with the man always up. It's a kind of marriage that tries putting the woman above. The idea of having a divorce and splitting everything to give the woman half of the possession. In the western world, you will find out that men are under pressure in that kind of setting. The kingdom marriage is the sweetest and that's what I'm recommending. You can't build a kingdom marriage for people outside the kingdom. You need to be under leadership of the kingdom.

Submission is an attitude of cooperation. One person must be the lead pilot while the other is assisting. Because you are copilot does not

really mean you are not as good as the main pilot. You are on assistant duty as a wife. You are there to support. Because you are assisting, does not mean you are less. Submission does not mean you are being suppressed. It's an attitude of choosing to cooperate, acknowledging that he's driving and I'm watching how he drives to show support. That's the mindset a woman needs to adopt. You can speak up when your husband is about to make a mistake and you can encourage him more when you see that he's doing well. You are not going to fight him over the wheel. When you do that, there will be an accident. He's the one driving and you are beside him to support, that's the mindset a husband and wife need to have.

When a man chooses to drive like a boss and not listen to his wife's input, then he will lose a lot of value God has given him in a wife. Sometimes, God puts the main brains of the family in a woman to support the man. Nobody needs to know it's the woman that brought up the ideas, the family takes the glory.

It's a common sight to see men not having problems with their fathers in-law but, it is different when it comes to the women and their mothers-in-law. Why could this be so?

Men generally are territorial, they respect one another's space. So, a man is not likely to come and exert authority over another man's space. A man respects his son in-law's house and don't want to stay much longer there than go back to their own territory where they are the king.

Women on the other hand, particularly, the mother of the son feels like it's God's compensation, especially if she came from a marriage that she didn't really enjoy. She feels she's fully invested in this person. She "made" him, she built him from the boy he was to the man he is now. She sees herself as the major stakeholder in the project (the son). It's not the fault of the wife. Just for even trying, you are a threat. We need to help women start to see that

in blocking the wife, you are you also frustrating your son. For the woman that comes into the life of the husband, the challenge is rivalry. She feels like a queen and the other person- the mother in law- is trying to say no. The secret is working with them to see a common ground. They actually have something in common. These are two women who want to see the man succeed. It's not supposed to be a big deal. If they keep fighting each other, they won't be able to add to his growth. It's a difficult dynamic but, workable.

Energy Commission of Nigeria Celebrates Its Director General

THE Director General, Energy Commission of Nigeria (ECN) has been lauded for his leadership style and "enviable" management qualities in

piloting the affairs of the commission.



**DR. MUSTAPHA ABDULLAHI, Ceng, MIMechE
DIRECTOR GENERAL/CHIEF EXECUTIVE
ENERGY COMMISSION OF NIGERIA**

Dr. Mustapha Abdullahi was described as not just a good manager of men and resources, but a man with an amiable personality

and God-fearing disposition.

"He has displayed an enviable leadership quality in the development of the sector through his significant contributions to the Commission, including the energy industry that has witnessed sustainable growth in energy solutions and has also fostered appreciable levels, a statement released by the management of the Commission, in Abuja, on Friday, 17 January 2025, to mark his birthday, read.

"His unwavering dedication to duty, improvements to staff welfare have remained a

rallying point that has continued to encourage staff, attract admiration and support to his policies for the overall good of the sector”, the statement added.

Commending Dr. Mustapha for the Renewed Hope that has lifted the spirit of the workforce from near-obscure in its over four decades of existence, the Management further urged him to remain focused on his vision to take the Commission to enviable heights for all and the nation at large.

Also, while describing him as a sound, visionary and genuinely dedicated person, the management thanked President Bola Tinubu for appointing Dr. Mustapha as Director General of the Commission.

“The ECN will set the tone for economic development, based on progressive innovation and policy initiatives, as envisioned by President Tinubu’s Renewed Hope Agenda”, the statement added.

Nigeria, First African Nation to Partner With Canada’s RNAO

THE Permanent Secretary of Nigeria’s Ministry of Health and Social Welfare has revealed that the country is first in the African continent to identify with the Registered Nurses’ Association of Ontario (RNAO), thereby, becoming the first BPSO designated host.

Describing it as remarkable, Daju Kachollom also said the ministry recognises the place of Nurses to achieve the mandate of the Nigerian healthcare system.



Kachollom revealed these at the Launch of the Best Practices Spotlight Organisation (BPSO) Host and Training of Trainers on Best Practice Guidelines for Nurses. The initiative is a collaborative effort between the Health Ministry and, the Registered Nurses’ Association of Ontario (RNAO) Canada. It is also aimed at improving quality healthcare services for Nigerians.

The Permanent Secretary further explained that the Ministry will be responsible for training, mentoring and overseeing nursing service delivery of the Federal Tertiary Health Institutions (FTHIs), as well providing support for the implementation of RNAOs Best Practice Guidelines (BPGS).

“Nurses will be equipped to deliver care that is not only evidence-based but also culturally sensitive and patient-centred, Kachollom, represented by the Director Food & Drugs Department of the Ministry, Pharmacist Olubunmi Aribena said in a statement issued on Monday, by Alaba Balogun, the Deputy Director, Information & Public Relations of the Ministry.

“This approach will undoubtedly contribute to the realization of the Coordinating Minister’s four point’s health agenda as well as global sustainable goals”, she stated.

She enumerated that the initiative is primed for

implementation in 15 hospitals selected for the pilot phase, and added that the Nigerian BPSO initiative will further entrench and strengthen the Ministry's agenda for population health outcomes.

"The Nigerian BPSO initiative is a step forward in fostering a healthcare system that prioritizes the highest standards of care. This training is a critical component of the Ministry's ongoing efforts to enhance the skills and expertise of nurses and other healthcare workers, equipping them with the tools needed to meet the tools needed to meet the evolving challenges in healthcare delivery"; the Permanent Secretary said.

Director, Hospital Services Department of the Ministry Dr. Salaudeen Jimoh said the launch ceremony precedes a four- day training programme of teams from the 15 selected FHTHI across the 6 geopolitical zones of the country, including a district hospital in the federal capital city.

Represented by Dr. Okpiko Okpako Director, Regulatory & Professional Schools unit; Dr Salaudeen emphasized the core essence of the collaboration, as being essential for exchange knowledge as both countries will learn some cultural peculiarities to care giving.

Several goodwill messages were delivered by various associations of nursing profession, including from Dr. Doris Grinspun CEO Registered Nurses Association Ontario (Canada) who signed the Memorandum of Understanding MoU for RNAO.

Technology on its Own Isn't Enough - François Xavier Dubois, Siemens Energy, on Regional Collaboration, Cross-Border Energy

Partnerships, and the Need for Speed

Siemens Energy is involved in transformational projects across East Africa. François Xavier Dubois, Head of Business Development for the region, spoke to EnergyNet about the progress being made, the barriers to transition, the significance of gas to power, green hydrogen, and the exciting potential for collaboration in the region's energy future.

Could you share some of Siemens Energy's recent projects in the region?

Siemens Energy has been at the heart of transformative projects across East Africa, each playing a pivotal role in shaping the region's energy future.

Take the Ethiopia-Kenya High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) Connection, for example. This groundbreaking project isn't just a technical achievement—it's a symbol of regional cooperation. By linking Ethiopia's abundant hydropower resources to Kenya's growing demand, this 2 GW electricity exchange has proven how cross-border energy partnerships can power entire economies while fostering sustainability.

In Tanzania, our work at the Ubungu Power Plant in Dar Es Salaam tells another powerful story. Here, three SGT-800 gas turbines supply 100 MW of electricity, meeting the city's growing energy needs with high efficiency. For many, this means reliable power for homes, businesses, and industries, driving Tanzania's aspirations for economic growth

Meanwhile, in Mozambique, Siemens Energy is contributing to two transformative projects. At Total Energies' LNG site in Cabo Delgado, we're supplying cutting-edge, emissions-reducing power generation equipment and boil-off gas compressors. This isn't just about energy production; it's about unlocking the potential of Mozambique's natural resources in an environmentally responsible way. Simultaneously, at the 450 MW Central Térmica de Temane power plant, six SGT-800 gas turbines are helping deliver electricity that is both efficient and clean, showcasing how advanced technology can support sustainable development.

Heading north to Ethiopia, we're proud to play a key role in the Asela Wind Farm project. In partnership with Ethiopian Electric Power (EEP), we're commissioning a 100 MW onshore wind farm to harness the country's natural wind resources. This project represents Ethiopia's commitment to renewable energy and Siemens Energy's dedication to helping nations meet their green energy goals.

These projects highlight Siemens Energy's ability to deliver impactful, tailored solutions. They also demonstrate the immense potential for cross-border energy collaborations, like the Ethiopia-Kenya HVDC connection. Imagine a future where similar partnerships extend across Uganda and Tanzania or Ethiopia and Tanzania, creating a web of shared energy resources that stabilize grids and accelerate renewable energy adoption. That vision isn't far off, and Siemens Energy is ready to make it a reality.

The technology is already there to make the transition happen – what do you see as the barriers?

The technology to drive the energy transition is ready, and Siemens Energy is at the forefront of making it accessible. But technology on its own isn't enough—we need collaboration across governments, businesses, and communities to

truly make this transformation happen. It's about finding the right balance between affordability, reliability, and sustainability while addressing the challenges that come with geopolitical pressures and the race to meet net-zero targets.

One of the biggest hurdles we face is timing. Developing energy projects in Africa often takes years—sometimes five or six—before they reach Financial Close. That's just too slow to keep up with the growing demand for energy, driven by population growth and industrialization. We need to see faster decision-making and streamlined processes so projects can move forward more efficiently and deliver results when they're needed most.



Another major challenge is outdated legislation. Energy systems today are more complex and interconnected than ever, and the regulations in many countries haven't kept up. For example, concepts like wheeling, where power is generated in one place and used in another, aren't fully supported in many areas. And policies to reward grid stability or modernize transmission models are still lacking. Without these updates, integrating renewables and attracting private investment becomes much harder.

Then, there's the issue of funding. Many governments in the region are balancing competing priorities like healthcare, education, and infrastructure, all while managing tight budgets and debt constraints. Unlocking private-sector investment is crucial, but it won't happen unless there's a clear, stable, and transparent environment that reduces risks for investors.

Beyond those big-picture challenges, it's also important to recognize that every country is starting from a different point. Some have strong renewable energy resources but weak grids. Others may have outdated regulations or specific risks that make investment tricky. There's no single solution that works everywhere. Each country needs a tailored strategy that takes into account its unique situation while also encouraging regional collaboration when it makes sense.

And speaking of infrastructure, we can't talk about the energy transition without focusing on the grid. It's the backbone of any energy system, but it often doesn't get the attention it deserves. Many countries focus on building new power plants but neglect the grid itself. That's a problem, especially as more renewable energy comes online. Grids need to be modernized and made more reliable so they can handle the variability of renewables and ensure stability. It's not just about adding more capacity—it's about making sure the energy flows where it's needed, when it's needed.

At the end of the day, the pieces are all there. The technology exists, and the will to transition is growing. But success will depend on how well we can work together—governments, businesses, and communities—to address these challenges head-on. East Africa has incredible potential to lead this transformation, and with the right focus and partnerships, I truly believe we can make it happen.

What do you see as the significance of gas-to-power projects in the region?

East Africa has a wealth of renewable energy resources—hydro, wind, geothermal, solar, and biomass. In fact, some countries in the region are already leading the way, with over 80% of their electricity coming from green sources. That's an amazing foundation to build on, and at Siemens Energy, we're passionate about supporting this kind of transition to a cleaner,

more sustainable energy future.

That said, renewable energy alone isn't enough to meet the region's needs. Renewables like wind, solar, and even hydro are inherently variable—they depend on the weather, the time of day, or the season. To fully integrate them into the energy mix, you need other technologies to bridge the gaps when the wind isn't blowing or the sun isn't shining. Batteries are a great solution for short-term storage, but they're not yet capable of providing the kind of long-term reliability that's needed. That's where gas-to-power projects come in.

Modern gas turbines, especially in combined cycle setups, are incredibly efficient and reliable. They provide the flexibility needed to balance the grid, ensuring there's always power available when renewables can't deliver. Compared to alternatives like reciprocating engines, gas turbines also have significant environmental advantages—they use less lubricant and produce far fewer nitrogen oxides, which makes them a cleaner choice for meeting energy demand.

Looking ahead, gas-to-power projects are about more than just filling today's energy gaps. They're also an essential stepping stone toward a net-zero future. For instance, Siemens Energy is already designing gas turbines that can run on hydrogen, which is a completely clean fuel. Right now, our turbines can operate with up to 70% hydrogen, and we're working to make them 100% hydrogen-ready by 2030. That means the gas plants we're building today can transition to fully green fuels in the future, ensuring they remain a vital part of the energy mix without contributing to emissions.

In the long run, we see gas power plants as a key piece of a renewable-based energy system. They provide the reliability and dispatchable power needed to stabilize the grid, while also paving the way for a future where those same plants can run on clean hydrogen. It's all about

creating an energy system that's not only sustainable but also adaptable to the needs of future generations.

Are there any green hydrogen projects on the horizon?

Absolutely. Since moving to East Africa in 2023, I've been amazed at the level of interest and activity around green hydrogen. There's a growing number of developers working on projects like green fertilizer, eSAF (sustainable aviation fuel), eAmmonia, eMethanol, and other hydrogen-based solutions. It's an exciting time because these projects have the potential to not only transform the energy sector but also reshape industries like agriculture, transport, and manufacturing.

That said, green hydrogen is still a relatively new technology, and it requires building an entire ecosystem from scratch. Things like legislation, offtake agreements, and standardization all need to be developed and agreed upon. It's a complex process, and understandably, it's taken some time for the market to fully grasp the challenges and figure out how to overcome them.

Looking ahead, I think the next two to five years will be pivotal. We're on the brink of seeing the first sizable green hydrogen projects in the region—those in the range of 50 to 200 MW. What's particularly exciting is that many of these early projects are focused on local offtake, meaning they'll produce hydrogen-based products for use right here in the region. This not only reduces dependency on imports but also creates jobs and strengthens local economies.

There's still work to be done, but the momentum is there, and I'm confident that East Africa is positioned to become a leader in green hydrogen innovation. It's a space to watch, and Siemens Energy is committed to supporting the development of this transformative sector.

What are you most looking forward to, and what would you like to see come out of conversations at the East Africa Energy Cooperation Summit (EA-ECS)?

What excites me most about EA-ECS is the opportunity it creates for collaboration. The energy transition is a challenge no single organization or government can tackle alone—it requires everyone, from policymakers to private sector leaders, to come together and work toward shared solutions. Events like this are critical because they act as catalysts, bringing the right people into the room to move projects forward and unlock new possibilities.

I'm especially looking forward to the open conversations that happen at these summits. They're a chance to put all the challenges we face on the table—whether it's financing, infrastructure, or policy—and tackle them collectively. It's not just about sharing ideas but finding real, actionable solutions that can benefit not just the energy sector, but also the communities and industries that depend on it.

At the heart of it, the goal is to drive meaningful progress—progress that's fair, sustainable, and inclusive. It's about making sure that as we transition to greener energy, we're also fostering social and industrial development in a way that benefits everyone. That's the kind of impact I'm hoping to see come out of this summit, and I'm optimistic that the conversations we'll have will pave the way for just that.

FX also spoke at the panel discussion: Enhancing Energy Systems - Integrating Natural Gas into the Grid, at EA-ECS on Wednesday 29 January.

Minister of State, for Industry, Trade and Investment Commends Nigeria, Benin Bilateral Relations

The Nigerian Minister of State, Industry, Trade

and Investment, Senator John Owan Enoh last Tuesday met with the Minister of Commerce and Industry, Benin Republic to inspect Savé Sugar Company, a joint venture between the two countries.

Sen. Owan commended the “extra security measures” put in place by the government of Benin to secure the Savé Sugar Company which was formed in 1975.

While carrying out an on-site inspection of the facility, the Minister said the company has experienced changing fortunes and now lies almost moribund. “Various meetings at both technical and policy levels have continued to be held, Senator Owan said.

But, away from these, action is needed. We seek its revival. The two countries, as a matter of urgency, need to get a worthy core investor in short time. This is not just about sugar; it is about livelihoods, partnerships, and the shared future of our nations.

“However, where that is not feasible, the recommendation of the 2021 joint assessment report which submits to the selling of our equity in the company will be brought to the table for possible consideration”, he stated.

Benin Republic Minister of Commerce and Industry, Shadiya Alimatou Assouman described the meeting with her Nigerian counterpart as significant and said it resonates with shared concerns and aspirations of both countries.



“This visit

marks a historic moment, she said. “Since the

inception of the company, no Nigerian minister has visited the facility. Your bold step signifies a commitment, not only to the sugar complex but, to the bilateral relations between our nations”, Assouman concluded.

South African Authorities Face Scrutiny Over Treatment of Trapped “Illegal Miners”

There are a growing concerns from the South African public over the handling of a standoff with illegal miners trapped in an abandoned gold mine, as the death toll from the incident reached at least 87.

The country’s authorities may face an investigation over their initial refusal to help the miners and instead “smoke them out” by cutting off their food supplies. This was condemned by one of South Africa’s biggest trade unions.

Though, no cause of death has been identified, the miners are suspected to have died of starvation and dehydration. Rescue attempts were made by locals when authorities said last year they would not help the hundreds of miners because, they were “criminals.”



Police and the mine owners were also accused of taking away ropes and dismantling a pulley system the miners used to enter the mine and send supplies down from the surface.

A court ordered authorities last year to allow food and water to be sent down to the miners, while another court ruling last week forced them to launch a rescue operation.

Mannas Fourie, CEO of the Mines and Rescue service, hailed the rescue and recovery operation as a “world first” with a “unique” machine that was “developed and designed in South Africa by the mining industry.”

“We didn’t anticipate that we will be so quick with the operation,” he added.

Many say the unfolding disaster underground was clear weeks ago, when community members sporadically pulled decomposing bodies out of the mine, some with notes attached pleading for food to be sent down.

“This government must make a plan and they must go to court. They must account for these bodies,” said Mandla Charles, a community volunteer helping with the rescue operation.

South Africa’s second biggest political party, which is part of a government coalition, called for President Cyril Ramaphosa to establish an independent inquiry. Authorities now believe that nearly 2,000 miners were working illegally in the mine near the town of Stilfontein, southwest of Johannesburg, since August last year.

ACReSAL Holds Technical Session On First Phase of Developed Strategic Catchment Management Plans

A Technical Session on the Presentation and Finalisation of the First Phase of the developed Strategic Catchment Management Plans (SCMP) for the Agro-Climatic Resilience in Semi-Arid Landscape (ACReSAL) States commenced on Monday in Abuja, the Nigerian capital, where stakeholders met to authenticate data collected during consultations.

This is in collaboration with the 19 northern states, including the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and marks a huge milestone in the country’s efforts to address climate challenges.

The technical session is a follow up to an earlier stakeholders engagement in Kano and a similar



one was held in Lafia, the capital of Nasarawa State to deliberate on the strategic management plan.

At the session, the National Project Coordinator of ACReSAL, Abdulhamid Umar emphasised on the importance of catchment-based planning, revealing that it is guided by natural hydrological flows than political boundaries.

Strategic Catchment Management Plan he says ensures that investments are streamlined to specific needs and natural resources of each catchment area, “so that investments will not be scattered without coordination or cohesion”.

“It requires a delineation, division of given communities, based on the availability of water force”.

He said water does not recognise political boundaries and to prevent conflicts between states, the catchment plans are scientifically developed, ensuring environmental sustainability.

So, in order to beat any political discussion into it, we designed the Hadeja – Jame’are”, he said.

Hadeja is located in Jigawa state, while Jame’are is in Bauchi state.



The Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Temitope Fashedemi said with the country's experience of climate risks that have resulted in disasters like flooding, rainfall, variability and deforestation, amongst others, has seen agricultural activities diminish in the northern part of the country.

He said ACRoSAL has since inception, worked to reverse the adverse effects of land degradation and other problems resulted from climate change, and is closely in alignment with the vision and mission of Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security.

Represented by Mr. Lawal Faya, he said the ACRoSAL project has supported the ministry's capacity to respond to the dual challenges of agricultural land degradation and climate change, through strategic partnerships and initiatives.

"ACRoSAL has supported the integration of climate-resilient agricultural practices into national programs like the Nigerian Farmers Soil Health Card Scheme, and Climate Smart Agriculture Manual Development. "Upgrade of National Soil Testing Laboratories and Conduct of Soil Fertility Evaluation are equally in the pipeline. This will enhance the ministry's ability to sustainably improve food security, and safeguard rural livelihoods", he stated.

He said the ministry, through the Department of Agricultural Land and Climate Change

Management Services, has received support in Information Communication and Technology (ICT). The technological resources he said, provided through the ACRoSAL project, will enhance efficiency, improve data management and capacity to achieve the ministry's goals.

"We will continue to leverage on this support to advance our mission and further improve our services. The impact of ACRoSAL is also evident in the 19 northern states and FCT, where it has directly addressed the vulnerabilities of semi-arid landscapes. Through its interventions, degraded lands have been restored to agricultural productivity, providing critical support and livelihoods.

"The establishment of community-based strategic catchment management systems will empower local populations to sustainably manage their natural resources. Moreover, the project has improved water resource management, ensuring that farmers and communities have access to this essential resource even in times of drought.

"These achievements have not only enhanced food production but have also mitigated the effects of desertification and climate change. The project has fostered a cohesive approach to addressing agro-climatic drawbacks. Training workshops, knowledge-sharing platforms, and capacity-building initiatives have strengthened institutional frameworks across all levels.

"This collaborative spirit ensures that the project's gains are sustained and all stakeholders are actively engaged in driving its objectives forward", he enumerated.

Permanent Secretary, Mahmud Adam Kambari, FCNA, FICA, FOSHA, said while reports of the other catchments (six in number) and wetland zones of the country's northern part are being developed in this first phase, the Hadejia Jama'are strategic catchment management plan was selected to be finalized, based on the

government's development priority and the promise to restore the Nguru wetland.

He disclosed that considering the coverage of the catchments being developed is massive, and also government focused, it became imperative that the catchment management plans are developed in fewer numbers hence, the structure and framework will be adopted for the rest of the remaining catchments.

Mr. Kambari also stated that the ACRoSAL project is not only about developing the 20 Strategic Catchment Plans, but that the Federal level and the ACRoSAL State Governors have commenced the development of 200 micro catchment management plans which will fit together the Strategic Catchment Management Plans at the state levels.

The Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Water Resources, R.P Pheelangwa said the Hedeija-Jama'are Catchment is not just a geographical area but, a shared resource that sustains the country.

"Our diverse perspectives, expertise, and experiences enrich our discussions and strengthen our commitment to crafting a holistic and inclusive plan that addresses the needs and aspirations of all stakeholders.

"It is essential that we harness the power of collaboration to address the complex challenges facing the catchment area, from environmental degradation to socioeconomic disparities. Through meaningful dialogue and cooperation, we can identify innovative solutions that promote resilience and sustainability for the communities involved", the PS, represented by Segun Mukaila Babarinde, the Director, Department of Water Support Services, said.

ACReSAL's Task Team Lead (TTL), Dr. Joy Iganya Agene said the ACRoSAL Project is not limited to the northern part of the country, and looking at Component C of the Project, it talks

about institution strengthening.

"When we strengthen institutions at the federal level, everyone will feel the benefits. Meeting on the strategic catchment management planning, which is a trans-boundary discussion shows a holistic approach", she said.

Dr. Agene said the strategic catchment management plan is not a state activity but, is controlled by water bodies and is trans-boundary.

"That is the reason we brought together states that are sharing the water and land resources in this boundary and watershed", she said.

"One institution that is not state specific, is the federal government, which accounts for why this strategic catchment management plan is led by the government, and the states are expected to come up with the technical requirements for the finalisation of the plan", Dr. Agene stated.

The strategic management plan is co-supported by Ministries of Water Resources, and Agriculture and Food Security, under the auspices of the facility given by the World Bank for the 19 northern states and the FCT to access.

Nigeria Inaugurates Committee to Review National Child Policy

A Committee to review the National Child Policy, last updated in 2007, was inaugurated by the Nigerian Minister of Women Affairs. It is aimed to strengthen child welfare and protection in the country.

This is pivotal in ensuring that National Policies remain responsive to the evolving needs of Nigerian children, according to a statement released by the Ministry on Friday 24th January, 2025.

Minister, Imaan Sulaiman-Ibrahim said children are the cornerstone of a nation, "our greatest

hope and most valuable resources".

"It is our collective responsibility to uphold their rights, nurture their development and create and create an environment where they can thrive and reach their potentials", she stated in the statement.

The Minister acknowledged progress made since the inception of the National Child Policy, particularly in the areas of education, health, and child protection, highlighting the persistent challenges such as poverty, gender inequality, inadequate access to quality education, and the impacts of insecurity, which continue to threaten the future of Nigerian children.

To ensure a comprehensive and impactful policy review, the Minister urged the committee to leverage technology and adopt a forward-thinking approach.

"Given the changing times, I encourage you to utilize your expertise, insights, and commitment to develop a robust review of the National Child Policy—one that is Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound (SMART),"* she added.

In her acceptance speech, the Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, Dr. (Mrs.) Maryam Ismaila Keshinro, reaffirmed the Ministry's commitment to the review process. She described children as the heartbeat of any nation, the hope, dreams, and endless possibilities of tomorrow.

Dr. Keshinro who is also the Chairman of the Committee further underscored the significance of the Nigerian National Child Policy, stating that it serves as a guiding framework for ensuring that every child receives the love, care, and opportunities they deserve.

She urged the committee members to embrace a revolutionary spirit of change that would address the diverse needs of children, regardless of their background, gender, or

circumstances.

"Let us work to ensure that our children are protected from harm, have access to adequate healthcare and mental support, and can flourish in an environment that values their contributions".

The Committee's work is expected to result in a policy that is more aligned with contemporary realities, fostering a safer, healthier, and more inclusive environment for Nigerian children, having the Terms of Reference as a guide.

Nigeria Reiterates Commitment to Malaria Elimination

Nigeria's Minister of State for Health and Social Welfare has reiterated the government's



readiness to eliminate malaria which is a prime agenda of President Bola Tinubu's administration, and in recognition of its socioeconomic importance.

Dr. Iziaq Salako, while hosting a Malaria Consortium team, led by Dr. Nnenna Ogbulafor, National Coordinator of the National Malaria Elimination Programme (NMEP), explained the gains in government's efforts to eliminate malaria through its Sector Wide Approach (SWAp) initiative that promotes collaboration between the Federal Government and its sub-national Governments.

This approach, he said, enabled the Ministry to track annual operations and implementation plans at state levels with a one voice one direction healthcare policy.

Supporting this SWAp initiative, the minister pointed out that the adoption of digital in health initiative, has been very critical to creating a central repository centre where information around health data can be accessed.

"We have the digital in health initiative, a nationwide initiative to digitalize our system at all levels of healthcare; primary, secondary and tertiary"; the Minister was quoted in a statement released by the health ministry on Sunday 26th January, 2025.



Dr. Salako commended the positive feedbacks from Malaria Consortium affirming these efforts by the government at the state levels. He further highlighted the impact of Basic Healthcare Provision Fund.

"The Basic Healthcare Provision Fund, I believe, covers malaria. And in this Government, the management of that fund has been reorganised. We are making the funds available regularly and I want to assure you that as a country, we will continue to cherish and support Malaria Consortium to deliver on your mandate, he said.

"I will continue to value the feedback from your own independent assessment of the implementation, effectiveness and the impact that these programs are making in our communities", Dr. Salako further stated.

Recognising Malaria Consortium as a global

brand in addressing challenges around malaria particularly in a country like Nigeria; the Honourable Minister said the Ministry valued its crucial role as a partner and collaborator in its agenda to eliminate malaria.

Director, Programme Malaria Consortium, Dr. Kolawole Maxwell appraised the Honourable Minister on outcome of its research on malaria cum assessment visits to both Northern and Southern parts of the country.

Highlighting the importance of collaboration between its Organization and stakeholders in Kano and Osun States; Dr. Maxwell reported the efficacy of using different approaches of research and methodology in malaria case management to achieve results.

"We are working with stakeholders to understand what are the incentives and barriers for use of nets. That is the first phase. The second phase is we are working with them to now use those findings to create what we call prototypes of solutions", he further stated.

Nigeria Endorses ACREsAL's Strategic Catchment Management Plan

The Nigerian government in December, endorsed the World Bank-funded Agro-Climatic Resilience in the Semi-Arid Landscape (ACReSAL) strategic catchment management plan.

At a stakeholders forum in the country's capital, Abuja, the endorsement of the Strategic Catchment Management Plan (SCMP) took a vital step in progression of the six-year project, sponsored by the World Bank.

Earlier, a technical session on the presentation and finalisation of the first phase of the developed Strategic Catchment Management Plans for ACREsAL states was held, where stakeholders met to authenticate data collected

during consultations.

The plan focuses on the Hadejia-Jama'are catchment areas of Jigawa and Bauchi states respectively, and is in line to address climate change problems, thereby, enhancing sustainable land and water management.

Describing the strategic catchments plan as a paradigm shift from the development of the country, "beyond state political boundaries and in consideration of its shared resources, heritage, responsibilities, and gains", Environment Minister, Balarabe Abbas Lawal said they mark a new frontier of economic development and environmental sustainability.

"These frontiers may become the new economic zones for its constituent people, hence, the need for the states to develop ways to best manage not only the resources but, the challenges", he said.

Mr. Lawal revealed that the development of the 20 strategic catchment or watershed management plans is the bedrock for the implementation of the ACRoSAL Project and added that it would be a foundation for another set of 200 micro catchment management plans from the 19 ACRoSAL participating states and the FCT "to dovetail into"

"These micro catchment management plans would be developed by ACRoSAL at state project management units, under the guidance of the Governors of the 19 ACRoSAL States and the Honourable Minister of the FCT", the Minister said.

Also, while endorsing the project, Water Resources and Sanitation Minister emphasised on the scientific and community-driven foundation of the SCMP.

Prof. Joseph Utsev said a key strength of the Strategic Catchment Plan is its emphasis on adaptive management, flexibility and responsiveness in adapting to emerging

challenges.

"This is crucial in an era defined by rapid change, whether it be climate fluctuations, population shifts, or technological advancements", he stated.

"This plan is rooted in science-based research and community feedback.



It prioritizes watershed protection, water quality enhancement, and habitat restoration, creating a legacy for future generations."Let us come together as advocates—champions for our environment, our economy, and our community's future", Prof. Utsev enumerated.

Minister of State for Agriculture and Food Security, Sen. Sabi Aliyu Abdullah commended ACRoSAL, led by its National Project Coordinator (NPC), Abdulhamid Umar for "tirelessly working to get to this significant milestone, a testament to our shared commitment to enhancing agricultural productivity, combating desertification, and fostering resilience in the face of climate change".

He said through sustainable land and water management practices, thousands of hectares of degraded land have been reclaimed, ensuring productivity.

Sen. Aliyu, while revealing that the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security is leveraging on ACRoSAL to develop a climate-smart agriculture

manual that will equip farmers with the tools and knowledge in adapting to changing weather patterns while maintaining productivity, he said the success of ACREsAL has been its emphasis on collaboration.

“By fostering partnerships among federal, state, and local governments, including non-governmental organizations, international partners and community residents, the project has ensured a holistic approach to tackling agro-climatic challenges”, he said.

He called for a collective vision of a resilient and food-secure society.

Gombe state Governor, Muhammad Inuwa Yahaya affirmed that the Strategic Catchment Management Plan is pivotal in curbing the effects of water scarcity, drought, and general land degradation.

Representing the Northern Governors Forum, where he leads as the chairman, he expressed commitment to an effective implementation of the SCMP, something he described as an “integrated plan”, as the operating framework for projects across the participating states. On the challenges faced by the north, he said the region is still endowed with substantial water resources, including rivers, inland lakes, and dams.

“These resources have significant irrigation potential that can be harnessed for all-year-round agricultural production by our local farmers through the application of the Strategic Catchment Management Plan”, he stated.

He said with the support of ACREsAL, Gombe state has planted over 4 million trees over the past four years, through its flagship programme, ‘Gombe Goes Green’.

Mr. Inuwa Yahaya further commended the ACREsAL project for contributing to a healthy and eco-friendly environment for human habitation, through dryland management practices, which include gully stabilization,

bioremediation, and afforestation activities.

ACReSAL’s Task Team Lead, said the Strategic Catchment Management Plan provides the platform for implementation of activities that will aid climate resilience.

Dr. Joy Iganya, while acknowledging that Nigeria and Africa as a whole, has suffered from challenges caused by climate change, she said the ACREsAL project is meant to provide support on how people can be resilient to climate change.

The NPC, ACREsAL, Abdulhamid Umar, expressed optimism in the significant progress made in addressing catchment management challenges across 19 participating states in the country. Umar described the validation event as a hallmark in the delivery of the ACREsAL project.

“(This event) marks the need to address issues surrounding the definition and delineation of the catchment areas by the Federal Government of Nigeria is necessary,” he said. While highlighting the extensive stakeholder engagement that has so far produced success of the project, he noted that it reflects the demands of rural dwellers.

“Stakeholders gathered for seven days in faraway Kano, where we listened attentively to the needs and demands of the catchment areas,” Umar explained.

“This effort is the largest with the highest magnitude of coverage and comprehensiveness,” he added.

December's gathering also brought together governors, representatives, traditional rulers of participating states, highlighting progress made.

With data centres set to account for 20% of global energy use by 2050, is East Africa on the precipice of a global gold rush as

it showcases a wealth of bankable businesses and unparalleled new energy potential?

In 2024, following EnergyNet's Powering Africa Summit in Washington DC, USA, Mara Holdings signalled their intent to invest in East Africa by signing a major off-taker MOU with the government of Kenya, setting the tone for what will potentially change the game for the region and the commercial validity for many IPPs.

At the East Africa Energy Cooperation Summit (EA-ECS), taking place 29-30 January in Arusha, Tanzania, we are pleased to unite the Africa's energy IPPs and EPCF stakeholders to explore the investment potential and innovations being created by strategically important companies, including Africa Data Centres and iXAfrica.

At the heart of this regional surge in investment activity sits the EAC Secretariat, who convene investors and policy makers alongside EnergyNet, focusing on "Resource Wealth. Energy Access. Investment Opportunities."

Building on the success of last year, the summit will foster cooperation across East Africa, reflecting the East African Community's (EAC) vision of deeper regional integration and the critical role of promoting industrialisation and cooperation among stakeholders.

Success stories, including the Ethiopia-Kenya electricity highway, underscore the transformative potential of cross-border collaboration for economic and social development.

Off-takers are boosting the need for energy generation and the summit will focus on both the mining industry and digital infrastructure.

Led by Ministers from across the EAC and large-scale energy users, over two days, the Arusha Summit will deep dive into opportunities for the private sector, advocating for a diversified

energy mix to maintain grid stability to support major industrial growth, as well as C&I generation.

"Energy is a pillar for development and growth and is crucial for the functioning of the economies of the EAC Partner States. The East Africa Energy Cooperation Summit will serve as the ideal platform for advancing projects and bringing tangible changes in the industry," said H.E. Honourable Andrea Malueth, Deputy Secretary General (Infrastructure, Productive, Social & Political Sectors), East African Community Secretariat.

EA-ECS will welcome prominent politicians and leaders from all countries of the EAC and its energy sector. They join the private sector business developers who are shaping the future of East Africa's energy landscape, serving some 500 million people.

"Ten years from now, the EAC's middle classes will have more job stability, more opportunities, and more disposable income than ever before. New railways, industries, ports, and tourism will position the region as the number one investment destination globally, taking the title back from both parts of Asia and Latin America," said Elisa Palmioli, Producer, EnergyNet.

Nigeria's Tech Ecosystem Must Leverage On France's Technological Strength - Communications Minister

Nigeria's Minister of Communications, Innovation, and Digital Economy, Dr Bosun Tijani, has advocated on the importance of leveraging France's technological strengths, such as Artificial Intelligence and sustainability, to bolster the country's innovation ecosystem, thereby, maximising opportunities presented by international collaborations.

He said that Nigeria's participation at the

upcoming Viva Technology (VivaTech) Conference 2025 in Paris is a pivotal moment for the nation's digital economy.

He also said platforms like VivaTech provide an unparalleled opportunity to showcase Nigeria's innovation and position its tech startups as leaders on the global stage.



The minister announced plans for a joint technology market to promote innovation and revealed that a 90-kilometre fiber-optic cable project is underway to strengthen Nigeria's internet infrastructure.

"This partnership represents a significant step forward in creating an environment where our tech startups can thrive, attract venture capital, and generate opportunities for economic growth," he said while speaking at the Nigerian-French Technology Roundtable on Friday 24th January, in Lagos, Nigeria.

The Consul General of France in Nigeria, Laurent Favier, said that technology was a key driver of Nigeria's international influence. Favier said that France was proud to collaborate in the journey.

"Events like VivaTech are vital for fostering global partnerships and expanding Nigeria's role in the digital economy," he said.

The roundtable was hosted in partnership with the French Embassy and Globacom.

It brought together industry leaders, policymakers, and representatives from VivaTech to explore opportunities for collaboration.

Discussants at the event focused on how Nigeria's participation in VivaTech could stimulate investment, foster innovation, and expand the country's global influence in technology.

The event highlighted Nigeria's emerging role as a hub for technological advancement.

VivaTech is an annual technology conference and trade show in Paris, France.

It is a global meeting place for startups, investors, and established companies to discuss and showcase the latest technological innovations.

Globacom, the sponsor of the roundtable, has consistently supported initiatives that position Nigeria as a leader in the digital economy.

The company's ongoing commitment to fostering growth in Nigeria's tech ecosystem is evident in its investments and various initiatives.

Nigeria's Real Estate Sector to Hit 2.25tn By December 2025 - Arc. Dangiwa

Nigeria's Minister of Housing and Urban Development has revealed that the country's real estate market will hit N2.25tn before the turn of the year.

Architect Ahmed Musa Dangiwa, also said the sector contributed 5.2 per cent to the nation's GDP in 2024.



According to him, Nigeria's huge housing deficit offers enormous business opportunities

Nigeria's housing deficit is estimated to be around 28 million units, which is a significant gap between the number of homes needed and the number available. This deficit increases as the country's population grows faster than the housing supply.

Arc. Dangiwa said the Renewed Hope Cities and Estates Programme serves as a low-hanging fruit for investors in the Middle Eastern nation to take advantage of and get good returns.

"Nigeria's real estate sector contributed around 5.2 per cent to the nation's GDP in 2024 and will increase in market volume to N2.25tn by the end of 2025. Despite this, there is still tremendous investment opportunity, especially in the residential real estate segment", Mr. Dangiwa was quoted in a statement released by his Special Adviser on Media and Strategy, Mark Chieshe.

He spoke at a panel discussion at the Saudi Arabia Real Estate Forum in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

The minister called on global investors in the middle eastern country to take advantage of the huge opportunities in Nigeria's housing sector.

"Nigerians need homes now more than ever and you can partner with the Nigerian government to

deliver these houses at scale," he said.

"The government is tackling this (housing deficit) by prioritising large-scale housing delivery through public-private partnerships, innovative financing, and government-led interventions. Additionally, efforts are underway to engage state governments in unlocking land for affordable housing projects, as difficulties in land acquisition continue to hinder progress", he added.

The forum themed "Balance and Innovation in the Real Estate Landscape" featured panellists including HE Eng. Abdullah Al-Attiya, Minister of Municipality, Qatar, and HE Dr. Abdulla Muththalib, Minister of Construction, Housing, and Infrastructure, Republic of Maldives.

ACReSAL Yobe State: Governor Buni Launches Gully Control Project, Distributes Climate-Smart Agricultural Input

- A Giant Leap towards Environmental Conservation and Agricultural Development

In a strategic step to protect the environment and boost agricultural productivity, Yobe State Governor, Mai Mala Buni, has launched a major erosion control project and distributed climate-smart farm inputs to local farmers.

Speaking at the groundbreaking ceremony, Governor Buni emphasized the importance of the project, stating that it marks a crucial milestone in the state's efforts to curb the devastating effects of floods and erosion in Buni Yadi/Damaturu.

"This project will curb the menace of floods and erosion, halting further destruction of the environment and its consequences on agriculture in the community," he said.

The governor assured the community that the

project will not only mitigate the impact of floods but also optimize water harvesting to boost irrigation agriculture, ensuring food security and economic prosperity.



He urged the community to take ownership of the project, cooperate with the contractors, and protect the infrastructure to ensure maximum benefits.

He presented cheques for compensation to those whose lands were affected by the project.

In addition to the erosion control project, Governor Buni distributed farm inputs to farmers who lost their farms to floods, enabling them to engage in irrigation farming.

This initiative demonstrates the administration's commitment to making agricultural practice attractive, productive, and profitable for local farmers.

The governor expressed his appreciation for the resilience of the communities affected by floods and erosion, praising their determination to continue agricultural practices despite the challenges.

Dr. Iganya Joy Agene, Task Team Leader of the Agro-Climatic Resilience in Semi-Arid Landscapes (ACReSAL) Project, noted that the World Bank and Federal Government team were present to support the governor in carrying out three key developmental activities.

These activities include the distribution of climate-smart inputs, presentation of cheques to affected community members, and the handing over of the gully site at Buni Yadi to contractor.

Dr. Agene mandated the contractor to ensure that the work is done according to World Bank approval, emphasizing the importance of community involvement, job creation, and sustainability.

She urged community members to take ownership of the investment and ensure its long-term benefits.

Furthermore, the Governor inaugurated a Water Quality Laboratory at the Ministry of Water Resources to ensure the safety of drinking water and prevent water-borne diseases.

The laboratory is equipped with modern facilities to test water quality and ensure it meets international standards.

This initiative is part of the state government's efforts to provide safe and clean drinking water to its citizens.

The ACReSAL project is a significant intervention aimed at enhancing the resilience of agricultural systems in semi-arid landscapes.

The project seeks to increase sustainable environmental practices, promote smart agricultural initiatives, improve access to water, build community climate resilience and most importantly foster community prosperity.

The successful implementation of the project will have a positive impact on the lives of farmers, herders, and other stakeholders in the agricultural sector, contributing to the state's overall development and growth.

ACReSAL, greening the environment, saving lives.

Nigeria Committed to Eradication of Non-Communicable Disease,

High Mortality Rate

The Nigerian government has reaffirmed its commitment to put into effect health education and prevention strategies, primed on eradicating the heavy burden of non-communicable diseases, high mortality rate and mother-to-child transmission of HIV.

The Minister for State, Health and Social Welfare revealed this at a reception of members of Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI), led by Dr. David Ripin, its Vice President, Infectious Diseases.

According to a statement released by the Ministry, Dr. Iziaq Salako, while speaking on the burden of diseases like cancers, hypertension and diabetes in the society, said "the government is adopting a more proactive approach of health education and prevention to completely address these unwholesome challenges".

The 2025 budget of the Ministry which will feature programs on cancer prevention at all levels, is a practical assurance to this approach, according to the Minister.

"This year in our budget, we are focusing a lot attention on cancer. A lot of that funding will be around cancer prevention, both at primary prevention and secondary prevention levels, with screening, population prevention, and so on and so forth"; Dr. Salako was quoted in the statement.

He further said the Nigerian government is prioritised on addressing and reducing high mortality rates to the lowest. He added that a programme known as Maternal Mortality Reduction Innovation Initiative has been launched by the Ministry.

"The Ministry will address challenges around providing maternal care, particularly in high-burden local governments for maternal

mortalities.

"Introducing minimal technology into maternal care plus ultrasound, would drive more women to come for antenatal care", the statement further read.

Dr. Salako commended the existing partnership between the Ministry and CHAI, saying, it would bring more positive impact and results to the average Nigerian.

Dr. Olufunke Fasawe, the Country Director of CHAI, spoke of the contributions of the organization towards improving acce



ss to healthcare delivery in the country.

These, according to her, include collaborating with the Health & Social Welfare Ministry on a 50% reduction in the prices of some chemotherapies and, supporting about 20 plus centres across the country. It is also aimed at ensuring that patients have access to these prices.

Dr. Fasawe also highlighted on cervical cancer elimination and on it, he said CHAI has moved cervical screening from outreaches, NGOs and, charitable events to integrating it into the normal routine services that will enable women, 25 years and above to get routinely screened for cervical cancer.

Furthermore, she stated over 57,000 women have received HPV screening, saying, CHAI was able to get a significant price reduction of HPV

testkits from about \$20 to now \$7 to achieve the high number of screened women.

Nigeria's Housing Deficit: An Big Opportunity for Transformative Change – Dangiwa

Advocates Public-Private Partnerships at the Saudi Arabia Real Estate Forum

Nigeria's Minister of Housing and Urban Development, Arc. Ahmed Musa Dangiwa, has described Nigeria's housing deficit as both challenging and an opportunity for transformative change.

He revealed this on Wednesday 29th January, 2025, at the 4th Edition of the Real Estate Future Forum in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.



The Minister highlighted government's commitment to addressing housing shortfalls through a blend of government finance and strategic public-private partnerships (PPP).

Mr. Dangiwa commended the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for its advancements in housing and urban development, noting that well-planned housing is essential for sustainable urban growth, economic prosperity, and improved

living conditions.

"With a housing deficit of over 20 million units and a rapidly growing population, Nigeria presents a vast opportunity for investment in affordable housing," the Minister said.

"To bridge this gap, we need to build about 500,000 housing units annually over the next decade.

He outlined Nigeria's ambitious Renewed Hope Cities and Estates Programme, a government-driven initiative to deliver 100,000 housing units in the first phase. These developments, designed as integrated communities, will cater to all income levels, including high-end residences and affordable units for low- and middle-income earners.

The Minister emphasized that affordability is central to the programme's success, with mortgage loans, rent-to-own options, made available through the Federal Mortgage Bank of Nigeria.

Beyond housing construction, Dangiwa listed the government's plans to establish Building Materials Manufacturing Hubs (BMMHs) in each of Nigeria's six geo-political zones. These hubs aim to reduce dependence on imported building materials, lower construction costs, and drive industrial growth.

Furthermore, he noted that the government is working to implement a Comprehensive Nationwide Social Housing Delivery Programme targeting vulnerable groups, aiming to provide 100,000 social housing units across Nigeria's 774 Local Government Areas.

Recognizing the scale of investment required, the Minister called on international investors, housing finance institutions, and reputable global developers to partner with the Nigerian government through Public-Private Partnerships. He assured investors of a conducive environment, including access to land, bankable

offtake guarantees, and necessary concessions to ensure mutually beneficial collaborations.

“The housing challenge in Nigeria is not just a problem; it is a massive opportunity for investment,” Dangiwa concluded. “By partnering with us, investors can play a crucial role in shaping the future of Nigerian housing while securing substantial returns on investment.”

The Minister reaffirmed the government’s dedication to fostering an inclusive and sustainable housing sector and invited stakeholders to collaborate in building a prosperous and resilient urban future for Nigeria.

The last day of the Saudi Real Estate Forum featured presentations from notable international figures such as the former President of the United States, Mr. Bill Clinton, Mr. Tucker Carlson, Global Media Influencer and several other high profile speakers.

EU Targets Technology, Healthcare, Strengthens Partnership With Nigeria

The European Union (EU) Ambassador to Nigeria, Mr Gautier Mignot, has expressed commitment to strengthen existing partnerships and contract new ones with the Nigerian government with a focus on digital technology, and healthcare, among other sectors.

Mignot, who recently assumed his role as EU Ambassador to Nigeria, made the commitment during a media parley on Monday in Abuja.

According to him, his priorities include fostering structured economic relations, as well as promoting trade and investment.

He said the EU would also focus on green economy and agri-food sector. Sharing his vision on how to enhance the existing and new EU-Nigeria partnerships, Mignot described Nigeria as a key player in Africa and the world and emphasized the EU’s commitment to being a reliable partner for the nation.

“There will be a consultation on global and regional issues as EU is already a main supporter of ECOWAS on all issues.

“We want to partner more closely with the Nigerian authorities, at Federal and local levels, and listen to their expectations, strategies and needs,” he said.

Identifying aspects of the EU’s mission in Nigeria, Mignot said he would be giving more visibility to what the EU has already achieved in Nigeria and with Nigeria, and also endorsing new initiatives and projects in order to explore the potential of these partnerships.

“We have a global and strong partnership between both countries, and it is based on shared values of human rights and the rule of law, democracy, and international law.

“These are based on common interest, and we are very transparent on the interest of Nigeria and EU in this partnerships,” he said.

He said that there were new initiatives and projects to be strengthened, adding that the EU would want a better structure in trade and investment partnerships, direct foreign investment, and economic relations.

“We want to achieve these partnerships through better structures in economic relations and dialogue to address and remove the issues that hamper more European investments in Nigeria and Europe trading,” he said.

The Role of Technology in Education Transformation

Technology is a game-changer in education, offering tools to enhance teaching, learning, and administrative processes. Globally, the integration of technology into education has transformed how knowledge is delivered and consumed. In Nigeria, however, the adoption of technology in education remains limited due to

infrastructure deficits and high costs.

Key Benefits of Technology in Education:

1. **Improved Access to Learning:** Online platforms and mobile applications can bridge gaps in educational access, especially in rural and underserved areas.
2. **Personalized Learning:** AI-powered tools can tailor educational content to individual student needs, improving engagement and outcomes.
3. **Teacher Support:** Digital tools can assist teachers in planning lessons, grading, and providing real-time feedback, reducing their workload and improving teaching quality.



4. **Global Competitiveness:** Exposure to digital tools prepares students for the modern workforce, where technological proficiency is a baseline requirement.

Practical Examples:

E-Learning Platforms: Initiatives like uLesson and Tuteria are leveraging technology to provide affordable, quality education to Nigerian students.

- **Smart Classrooms:** Pilot projects introducing smart boards, virtual reality (VR), and augmented reality (AR) are beginning to show promise in enhancing student engagement.
- **Data Analytics:** Institutions can use analytics to

monitor student progress and identify areas for intervention.

Entrepreneurship as a Catalyst for Growth

Entrepreneurship education equips students with the skills to create and sustain businesses, encouraging self-reliance and reducing unemployment. In a country where the unemployment rate stands at 33.3% (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022), advancing entrepreneurship is critical.

Key Benefits of Entrepreneurship Education:

1. **Job Creation:** Graduates equipped with entrepreneurial skills can start businesses, creating jobs for themselves and others.
2. **Economic Growth:** Entrepreneurship drives innovation, increases productivity, and contributes to GDP growth.
3. **Skill Development:** Beyond business skills, entrepreneurship cultivates resilience, adaptability, and problem-solving abilities.

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 aligns 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 institutions 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.

UNAIDS Welcomes US Decision to Keep Funding Life-Saving HIV Treatment

The move from the UN agency dedicated to ending the disease came in response to an immediate 90-day funding pause for all foreign assistance laid out in an executive order by President Trump, including the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). PEPFAR is the world's leading HIV initiative

which directly supports more than 20 million people living with HIV, representing two-thirds of all people receiving HIV treatment globally.

The waiver approves the continuation or resumption of "life-saving humanitarian assistance," which applies to core life-saving medicine and medical services, including HIV treatment, as well as supplies necessary to deliver such aid.

'Critical role'

"UNAIDS welcomes this waiver from the US Government which ensures that millions of people living with HIV can continue to receive life-saving HIV medication during the assessment of US foreign development assistance," said UNAIDS Executive Director, Winnie Byanyima.

"This urgent decision recognises PEPFAR's critical role in the AIDS response and restores hope to people living with HIV."

The funding pause of development assistance for "assessment of programmatic efficiencies and consistency with United States foreign policy," was one of the first major foreign policy decisions of the new administration.

UNAIDS will continue efforts to ensure that all people living with or affected by HIV are served and that other key components of PEPFAR's life-saving efforts, including service delivery and services for HIV prevention, care, and support for orphans and vulnerable children, are continued.

Immediate impact

Earlier, the UN World Health Organization (WHO) expressed deep concern about the implications of the funding pause for HIV programmes in low and middle-income countries.

These programmes provide access to life-saving HIV therapy to more than 30 million people

worldwide. Globally, 39.9 million people were living with HIV at the end of 2023.

"Such measures, if prolonged, could lead to rises in new infections and deaths, reversing decades of progress and potentially taking the world back to the 1980s and 1990s when millions died of HIV every year globally, including many in the US," said WHO in a statement issued before the Secretary of State's emergency waiver was announced.

More than 26 million lives saved

PEPFAR has been a flagship initiative of the global HIV response since its establishment over 20 years ago, WHO stressed.

Any funding pause for PEPFAR would have a direct impact on millions of lives that depend on the predictable supply of safe and effective antiretroviral treatment.

PEPFAR works in over 50 countries around the world and has saved more than 26 million lives over the past two decades. Currently, PEPFAR is providing HIV treatment for more than 20 million people living with HIV globally, including 566,000 children under 15 years of age.

Growing self-reliance

WHO said that over the past year, PEPFAR and partners – including WHO – "have been working on sustainability plans with countries for greater country ownership and reduced donor support up to and beyond 2030."

A sudden and prolonged stop to programmes would hamper a managed transition and puts the lives of millions at risk.

The agency said it would remain committed to supporting PEPFAR and other partners, as well as national governments, in managing change processes effectively to minimise the impact on people living with HIV.

Africa CDC Urges Domestic Health Funding

Amid Cuts, Outbreaks, Crisis

The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) has warned that funding shortfalls, insecurity, and multiple disease outbreaks are straining health response efforts across the continent.

Director-general of Africa CDC, Dr. Jean Kaseya raised these concerns on Thursday during the Mpox weekly briefing, emphasising the urgent need for domestic health financing to address Africa's growing health challenges.

Science Nigeria reports that the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared Mpox a global public health emergency in August 2024, marking the second such declaration in two years. The outbreak, originating from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), has spread to neighboring countries, worsening the continent's health crisis.

Kaseya highlighted the devastating impact of the ongoing conflict in Goma, DRC, which has escalated alongside suspected Ebola cases, Mpox outbreaks and cholera infections.

"This week started with an open war in Goma. We also recorded suspected Ebola cases in the DRC while Mpox and cholera outbreaks persist.

"It's one of the weeks we don't like at Africa CDC because, in addition to the health crises, we are dealing with a humanitarian emergency.

"But this is why Africa CDC exists – to support our member states and populations in the face of such challenges," he stated.

He noted that the ongoing instability in the DRC has severely disrupted disease surveillance and response efforts, making it difficult to track and contain outbreaks.

"The destruction of key laboratories and disruptions to health infrastructure in Goma have made monitoring and response

significantly more difficult.

“When we talk about disease surveillance, we talk about human resources – health workers, communities and frontline responders.

“But if they cannot operate due to security threats, how can we ensure effective disease tracking and containment?” he asked.

Kaseya disclosed that while the U.S. pledged \$1.1 billion for health support, only 60 per cent of the committed Mpox funding has been received, leaving a 40 per cent gap.

Although Africa CDC welcomed the exemption granted for continued financial support, he emphasized the urgent need for Africa to reduce its dependence on foreign aid.

“We are entering a new era where we will see a definite decrease in foreign assistance to Africa.

“This means we, as Africans, must take ownership of our health systems – strengthening local manufacturing, improving disease surveillance and digitising healthcare systems to become self-sufficient,” he said.

To address the growing funding crisis, Kaseya revealed that Africa CDC is convening a high-level meeting on February 14 in Addis Ababa, called by President Paul Kagame.

At this summit, African heads of state will discuss strategies to mobilize domestic resources for healthcare financing.

The meeting aims to develop sustainable funding mechanisms, reduce reliance on foreign aid, and strengthen health infrastructure across the continent.

“This is the change we are bringing to Africa – better communication, more transparency, and a stronger push for domestic resource mobilisation,” Kaseya said.

The Africa CDC director-general acknowledged

the logistical challenges in delivering vaccines to Goma and other affected areas, as well as uncertainties regarding mortality and morbidity projections from the Ebola outbreak in DRC and Uganda.

“We do not yet have all the answers regarding vaccine distribution, death rates, or the full extent of the Ebola outbreak, but we are committed to providing timely updates and ensuring transparency in our response,” he assured.

Despite significant obstacles, he reiterated Africa CDC’s commitment to strengthening health systems, improving surveillance, and securing sustainable funding to combat current and future health threats.

The February 14 Addis Ababa meeting is expected to set the stage for a new era of African-led health financing and policy reforms, ensuring that the continent takes charge of its healthcare future.

Rachael Abuajah

Trump’s Pause on Foreign Aid Raises HIV Risks for Millions, World Health Organization Warns

Global health authorities are raising the alarm after US President Donald Trump froze funding for anti-HIV programmes that cover treatment for 30 million people worldwide.

The World Health Organization (WHO) said the temporary pause on all foreign aid puts access to HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) diagnostics, medicines, and treatment at risk in low and middle-income countries, which could have dire health consequences.

“A funding halt for HIV programmes can put people living with HIV at immediate increased risk of illness and death and undermine efforts to prevent transmission in communities and

countries," the WHO said in a statement.

A prolonged pause on foreign assistance could take "the world back to the 1980s and 1990s when millions died of HIV every year globally".

US freeze on foreign aid funding is a 'death sentence' for people in need, NGOs warn

As of 2023, 39.9 million people were living with HIV, with about two-thirds of them in Sub-Saharan Africa.

It remains a leading cause of death globally, with about 630,000 AIDS-related deaths that year – but that's down from 2.1 million in 2004 thanks largely to the introduction of new medicines that curb transmission and prevent HIV from progressing to AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome).

The US funding freeze's biggest hit will be to the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), which is credited with saving more than 26 million lives since being launched by then-President George W. Bush in 2003.

In 2024, the programme provided antiviral HIV treatments for 20.6 million people in 55 countries, according to the US government.

It also got 2.5 million started on PrEP, which prevents HIV infection and got 83.8 million people tested.

PEPFAR supports 342,000 health workers whose jobs will be affected by the funding pause, which also applies to other foreign aid programmes that collectively cover HIV treatment for 30 million people.

US pulling back from global health leadership

The pause isn't Trump's only move to pull back from global health leadership since assuming office last week.

He started the process of withdrawing the US from the WHO and reinstated the Mexico City

Policy, which bars the US from giving money to foreign groups that perform or offer information on abortions.

The new US president's chief complaints include criticism of the WHO's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic and the US's outsized role in funding the organisation.

The WHO said it's been working with countries where PEPFAR operates to take more ownership of the programme and reduce their reliance on donors such as the US by 2030.

But Trump's "sudden" funding pause could upend those efforts, making it harder to coordinate the transition and putting "the lives of millions at risk," the agency said.

The organisation wants "exemptions to ensure the delivery of lifesaving HIV treatment and care".

They might get some after US Secretary of State Marco Rubio reportedly issued a humanitarian waiver on Tuesday for critical health services affected by the funding freeze.

The waiver applies to "core lifesaving medicine, medical services, food, shelter, and subsistence assistance, as well as supplies and reasonable administrative costs as necessary to deliver such assistance," The Washington Post reported.

But it is still unclear whether the exception will apply to PEPFAR.

Kano's Public Health Security Bill Sets a Model for Nigeria's Other States

In a landmark step reported on January 19, 2025, the Public Health Security Bill was signed into law by the Kano State Governor, His Excellency Abba Kabir Yusuf. The bill, which serves as a framework for public health surveillance, emergency management, and the protection of

healthcare workers, is Nigeria's first subnational Public Health Security Bill.

Back in 2017, Nigeria was rated as "not ready" to manage significant health security threats, scoring a ReadyScore of just 39% in the first Joint External Evaluation (JEE), a tool used to assess various countries' health security capacities under the International Health Regulations (IHR) framework.

As of August 2023, Nigeria achieved significant progress by raising its JEE score to 54%. However, considerable legislative gaps remained, especially concerning the institutional legal frameworks that govern public health prevention, detection, and response mechanisms. Additionally, health security laws at the subnational level needed improvement to enhance local epidemic preparedness and align with federal and international standards.

In June 2024, the IHR was subject to amendments to address weaknesses exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Countries are now required to update their legal frameworks to reflect these changes, which includes establishing a National Coordinating Authority to manage multisectoral coordination during public health emergencies and primarily strengthening core capacities at the subnational level and ensuring that local governments are prepared to respond effectively to outbreaks.

Global experience has shown that well-designed legal frameworks, especially at the state level, can significantly enhance health security. If national and subnational legal reforms adequately support amendments, countries can make substantial progress in safeguarding public health.

In federated systems like Nigeria, state governments have significant autonomy to legislate and implement health policies suited to their unique needs. Therefore, subnational health security becomes essential for

strengthening epidemic preparedness at all levels.

A little bit of background

While the Federal Government has been making strides to increase this score, subnational efforts are equally critical. In June 2021, a significant stride was made in Kano State, which conducted its own JEE using a version of the evaluation tool adapted for state-level assessments. The evaluation reviewed 15 technical areas of infectious disease prevention, detection, and response, achieving a score of 46%, placing it in the "Work to Do" category according to PreventEpidemics.org. This suggests efforts have been fair, but more effort was needed to strengthen epidemic preparedness and response (EPR).

To bolster the state's effort Resolve to Save Lives, in partnership with the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC), the Government of Kano State, the Centre for Awareness on Good Governance and Development (CAGGAD), the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), Lafiya Nigeria, the Legislative Initiative for Sustainable Development (LISDEL), and the Global Health Advocacy Incubator (GHAI), began to develop legal reforms that align with national and international health security standards.

Federal lawyers from NCDC worked closely with state-level legal teams, providing technical assistance and guidance. A review of the state legal landscape and mapping was conducted, and the outcome indicated major gaps in the legal and regulatory framework necessary to support health security efforts. Kano State's House of Assembly received the report and showed enthusiasm for remedying the identified gaps.

With all the partners working collaboratively and comprehensively, the state legislators developed a draft State Bill based on the gaps identified.

This document provided a basis for further discussions and advocacy by other organisations. The draft aimed to provide a comprehensive, multi-sectoral approach to health security, recognising key government agencies involved in health security and their roles, drawing from key documents such as the Technical Guidelines on the Integrated Disease and Surveillance Response (IDSR), and adopting a One-Health and human rights approach.

After years of collaboration—marked by regional outbreaks, in-depth assessments, and rigorous debate—the Kano State Health Security Bill was finally passed by the Kano State House of Assembly in February 2024 and then became law in 2025.

The International Health Regulations (IHR, 2005) provide an overarching legal framework for countries to prepare for, detect, and respond to public health events that may cross international borders. These regulations, legally binding for 196 countries (including the 194 WHO Member States), emerged as a global response to historical epidemics that ravaged Europe. Under the IHR, countries have obligations, such as reporting public health emergencies and building core capacities for surveillance and response.

In Nigeria, the IHR framework shapes national health policies and preparedness strategies. A key requirement of the IHR is the designation of a National IHR Focal Point to facilitate communication with the WHO. Nigeria fulfils this role through the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC), which was formally established by the NCDC Act of 2018.

In June 2024, the IHR underwent critical amendments to address weaknesses exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Countries are now required to update their legal frameworks to reflect these changes, which include establishing a National Coordinating Authority to manage multisectoral coordination during public health emergencies and primarily strengthening

core capacities at the subnational level, ensuring that local governments are prepared to respond effectively to outbreaks.

While passing the Bill is a significant achievement, several key actions must be taken immediately to ensure its effectiveness:

1. Establishing effective frameworks for implementation: Practical guidelines and operational frameworks are needed to support the implementation of the new law. This includes identifying clear roles, responsibilities, and reporting structures for various stakeholders.

2. Awareness and sensitisation campaigns for stakeholder buy-in: Building awareness and fostering multisectoral collaboration is essential for the law's success. Engaging government agencies, health workers, community leaders, and civil society organisations will create ownership and promote compliance.

3. Encouraging other states to replicate Kano's process: Kano's success provides a model for other states to follow. Sharing lessons learned through advocacy efforts and technical assistance will encourage similar health security initiatives across Nigeria, contributing to national health security.

Ibukun Oguntola, Nigerian Health Watch.

Jason Brewer, CEO, Marula Mining Talks Power, Renewables, and Opportunities for East Africa

Marula Mining, the African-focused mining and development company, aims to advance sustainable mining. We spoke with CEO Jason Brewer about projects in Tanzania and Kenya, and how mining and energy can mutually benefit each other and the communities they serve.

What do you see as the importance of the East Africa Energy Cooperation Summit for the

region?

Each of the countries in the region is embarking on massive projects towards economic growth. And to achieve that, you need long-term energy solutions, which in turn need vision and a coordinated plan.

Without energy, you cannot start delivering on any of your hopes of developing major projects that are going to bring long term benefits to your citizens.

This summit highlights the broader impact that energy can have in the region – a region that has the potential to be 100% renewable.

There is no reason to be using fossil fuels. Some of the countries have tremendous oil and gas reserves, but East Africa is uniquely positioned to lead in geothermal – which Kenya is obviously spearheading – as well as solar, wind, and hydro power.

From my point of view, EA-ECS is about showcasing the region to investors as a hub for sustainable growth, renewable energy, and transformative projects that can boost employment, improve living standards, and change lives.

Can you tell us about your mines in the region and any project plans?

We are developing a copper mine in Tanzania, with commercial sales expected to begin by year-end 2025, and our graphite projects in the Dodoma region are on track to start production then too.

In Kenya, we have two manganese mining operations and are exploring further projects in copper and in graphite. We've started on a fairly small scale but are looking at major expansion.

In Tanzania, we have plans to move away from a lower value copper concentrate to producing a copper cathode. This is a tremendous project in

terms of its scale, but we are limited because of the current power availability.

Jason Brewer, CEO, Marula Mining

Addressing this power challenge is a critical focus for us in 2025, and essential to unlocking the full potential of the project and delivering benefits to local communities.

In Kenya, we're moving away from basic mining and looking at value-added opportunities across the battery metals sector.

To do that, we need access to power. One of the great benefits in Kenya is that you can always guarantee that 100% of your power is renewable. As a socially responsible mining company, this is very important to us.

We want to work with groups who can focus on mining as a sector that they can support, for example with solar power stations.

Collaborating with experienced private sector partners who understand the risks and opportunities of mining is essential as we look to scaling our operations to their full potential across East Africa.

How do you think the mining and energy sectors can connect and mutually benefit each other?

Mining projects can serve as powerful catalysts for economic growth, sustainable business enterprises, and improved infrastructure.

Where utilities and power companies might be holding back on putting energy into a region, mining can act as the base load.

We can be the key industry that makes it compelling for them to go ahead and put in the transmission lines, substations and investment which otherwise would not be justified.

Mining rarely occurs near major cities; it's typically in areas lacking historical development,

where companies are reluctant to invest without assurance of returns.

Both the mining and energy sectors are commercial enterprises, so mutual benefit is key.

Utilities need a base load; we need reliable power.

Relying on diesel generators is a short-term fix but not a sustainable or economical long-term vision.

Mining's role is clear: it can anchor the infrastructure development that regions need to thrive.

How do you address your power needs currently, and are there plans to change?

We are somewhat constrained by the availability of power.

The Kinusi copper mine in Tanzania is an example. The design and production parameters are set for operations to start up in the second half of 2025, based on the limited power available in the region.

Going forward, we need to take control and partner with dynamic energy companies who can support us with small hydro and solar projects.

I expect significant progress in Tanzania in 2025 as we push ahead with this.

In South Africa, we have a lithium mine in the Northern Cape where we will be establishing a major processing facility, and are already in discussions with providers for a large solar plant to support our growth.

Reliable power for mining is critical, as disruptions can have a major impact on equipment and operations.

I see the current constraints changing significantly as we move forward, finalise

partnerships, and put in place the more sustainable, renewable energy solutions that we need.

The potential for young people in the energy sector could be huge – what initiatives is Marula involved in?

We have internship programs that are both office-based and out in operations.

These are currently focused in Kenya, where we work with one of the universities.

Geologists, young graduates, and students out in the field are gaining practical experience with us that will lead to full-time job opportunities.

We also have other students, including recent graduates in finance and in human resources.

We're working with the Mining Engineers Society of Kenya (M.E.S.K), and we want to expand our programmes through Tanzania too.

One of the biggest challenges here in Kenya, and in many African countries, is that there is such a well-educated young population, but unemployment levels are very high.

There are several universities that allow people to study and qualify as geologists, mining engineers, and mineral processors, but many young people graduate without any experience, and the opportunities for them just aren't there.

We're trying to create a platform that gives them practical experience while they're at university and an opportunity immediately after graduation.

We will do as much as we can. There are lots of initiatives, and we will keep pushing them out there.

What are you most looking forward to, and what would you like to see come out of conversations at the summit?

I had a great time last year, as it allowed me to

connect with people I don't usually see.

This is an opportunity to showcase the projects we are developing, expanding, and aiming to impact in these countries and to get on the radar screen of people who can help us achieve our goals.

Meeting people is key. And one of the great things about the summit is the government involvement - I'm looking forward to having the opportunity to engage face-to-face.

I'm looking forward to coming out of the summit with the solutions that we've been pushing for our energy needs.

We've been out there chasing, and I'm hoping that with the awareness of what we're doing, and the kind of approach that we take, people will view us as an opportunity.

I'd like to see a competitive playing field where various groups could provide power solutions for us, recognising us as a long-term player with robust mining projects, where they can justify getting involved and putting in place the necessary infrastructure to support us.

That's what I'd love to see.

Jason also spoke at the panel discussion Powering the Mining Sector – Understanding Current Needs at EA-ECS on Thursday 30 January.

Nigeria, Stakeholders Collaborate to Review National Gender Agriculture Policy

Nigeria's Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security has announced collaboration with the International Centre for Environmental Health and Development (ICEHD) and other stakeholders to strategically review the National Gender Policy on Agriculture to promote sustainable agricultural practices, empower

farmers and enhance food security.

Permanent Secretary of the Ministry, Dr. Marcus Ogunbiyi, FNSE, represented by Director Special Duties, Mrs. Kachallah Damaturu said the policy which was launched in October, 2019, is key to addressing challenges faced by rural women farmers, described as the backbone of the Agriculture sector.

While revealing that the ministry's mission aligns with the goals of ICEHD, recognizing the value of collaboration in driving meaningful change, Mr. Ogunbiyi added that through partnership, the Ministry aims to strengthen the policy framework, enhance capacity building, and promote gender equality.

"We must recognize the importance of a collaborative approach. We will work closely with ICEHD, government and other non-government organizations, civil society, and the private sectors to ensure our efforts are complementary and effective", he was quoted in a statement issued by the ministry on Tuesday.

Director Special Duties, Mrs. Kachallah Damaturu said the review of the gender policy was not just an administrative task, rather, an opportunity to enhance women's participation, address barriers they face, and ensure equitable access to resources and opportunities.

"We seek to identify gaps in our current policy framework and explore innovative strategies that can empower women in agriculture. Your contributions are invaluable as we strive for a more inclusive agricultural landscape", Mrs. Damaturu stated.

Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, Dr. Maryam Keshinro, represented by Director Gender Affairs, Adamu Samaila Web, said the review was an opportunity to refine and strengthen the policy to reflect the evolving needs of women, men and youths in the Agriculture sector.

She stated that it was a moment to ensure that the voices of those most affected by systematic inequalities are heard and their contributions recognized, adding that it is also a call to action for all stakeholders, government, private sector, civil society and development partner to work collaboratively and purposefully towards translating the policy into impactful change.

Highlights of the event was the general discussions on the policy review process by the National Gender Steering committee, overview of the existing policy, the journey so far on the policy implementation process and the presentation on findings of the situational analysis of gender based violence in agrifood systems.

In attendance were representatives of the National Council of Climate Change, NCCC, Federal Ministry of Environment, Women farmers associations and cooperatives, AGRA, Policy Innovative Centre, Plan International, amongst others.

New Nigerian jihadist group declared terrorists

Nigeria's authorities have officially declared the Lakurawa armed group - which flogs people for listening to music - a terrorist organisation and banned it across the country.



Lakurawa is a new militant group which carries out attacks, targeting local communities in north-western Nigeria and across the border with Niger.

Nigerian officials say Lakurawa is affiliated with

jihadist factions in Mali and Niger, and its militants have for years settled in communities along the Nigeria-Niger border, marrying local women and recruiting youths.

This adds to Nigeria's security concerns, as it is already fighting against several armed groups, from Islamist militants Boko Haram to kidnapping gangs.

The Nigerian government submitted a document to a High Court in the capital, Abuja, on Thursday, detailing the activities of the group.

It said Lakurawa had been involved in acts of terrorism, including cattle rustling, kidnapping for ransom, hostage-taking and attacks on top government officials.

The group was also accused of spreading harmful ideology within local communities and encouraging locals to disregard authorities, "resulting in injuries, and loss of lives and property to innocent citizens of Nigeria".

Nigeria's mass abductions: What lies behind the resurgence?

The group emerged few years ago in some villages in Sokoto and Kebbi states and people had notified authorities of its existence but nothing was done.

At first, Lakurawa members promised to tackle banditry and help protect local people from cattle thieves.

"But things escalated when they started asking to check people's phones and would flog those that have music in them before deleting them," one Sokoto resident told the BBC last year.

In the court papers, Nigeria's Attorney-General and Minister of Justice Lateef Fagbemi said the group's activities posed a serious threat to national security.

Last year, military spokesperson Maj Gen Edward Buba said the emergence of Lakurawa

was directly linked to political instability in neighbouring Mali and Niger.

The military has seized power in both countries, partly because of the pressure of an Islamist insurgency.

In a swift decision, Justice James Omotosho declared the group "a terrorist organisation and extended the ban to similar groups across Nigeria, with a specific focus on the North West and North Central regions".

This move will give the Nigerian government sweeping powers to take strong actions against the group.

Security agencies now have broad mandates to disrupt and dismantle the group's operations, including arrests, prosecution, asset freezes, and increased surveillance.

It could also lead to public stigma and isolation for individuals associated with the designated group.

Across the country, especially in northern Nigeria, people fear another scenario similar to when Boko Haram emerged in the late 2000s.

Boko Haram means "Western education is forbidden", and it has repeatedly targeted secular schools as part of its attempts to establish its version of Islamic rule in the region.

The group gained notoriety internationally when it kidnapped more than 200 school girls from the north-eastern town of Chibok in 2014.

The BBC.

'We dig graves for free, like our fathers did before us'

For more than 50 years, one family has dedicated itself to caring for the biggest graveyard in Nigeria's northern city of Kaduna - much to the gratitude of other residents who do

not fancy the job of dealing with the dead.

Until a few weeks ago, they did it for no formal pay - digging graves, washing corpses and tending to the vast cemetery, receiving only small donations from mourners for their labour.

The vast Tudun Wada Cemetery was set aside for the Muslim residents of the city by the authorities a century ago.

The Abdullahi family became involved in the 1970s when two brothers - Ibrahim and Adamu - began working there.

The two siblings now lie beneath the soil in the graveyard, and their sons have become the cemetery's main custodians.



"Their teachings to us, their children, was that God loves the service and would reward us for it even if we don't get any worldly gains," Ibrahim Abdullahi's oldest son Magaji told the BBC when asked why they had chosen to continue as unpaid undertakers.

The 58-year-old is now in charge at Tudun Wada - shepherding operations and the 18 members of staff or until recently - volunteers.

He and his two younger cousins - Abdullahi, 50, and Aliyu, 40, (Adamu Abdullahi's sons) - are the three full-time workers, all reporting in by 07:00 for a 12-hour shift, seven days a week.

They always need to be on call because, according to Muslim rites, a burial should be organised within a few hours of someone's

death.

It can take at least an hour to dig a grave - and is done to exact measurements sent by those preparing the body

Magaji tends to get the call on his mobile, either directly from a relative or an imam - all religious clerics in the city have his number.

"A lot of people have our numbers and as soon as someone dies, we get a call and immediately we get to work," he says.

One of the trio goes to tend to the corpse, which may include washing it and wrapping it in a shroud.

The body is measured and those details are texted back to the others so that a grave can be dug.

This can take around an hour - with two people taking it in turns to dig down 6ft (1.8m) into the earth - sometimes longer when it is in a stony area of the graveyard.

They can dig around a dozen graves in a day - hard work in the Kaduna heat.

"Today alone we have dug eight graves and it's not even noon, some days are like that," says Abdullahi, who began work at the cemetery when he was aged 20.

The cousins have experienced very stressful times - especially during religious violence when tensions flare between the city's Christian and Muslim residents. The two communities tend to live on opposite sides of the Kaduna River.

Funerals usually take place on the same day a person dies - and most days there are around a dozen held at Tudun Wada

"We have had a couple of religious clashes in Kaduna but the one that sticks the most for me was one in the early 1990s. A lot of people were killed," says Magaji.

"We went round gathering the corpses and taking them off the streets."

Muslims were taken to Tudun Wada in the north of the city and Christians to graveyards in the southern suburbs.

"It was such a troubling time personally and I wasn't long in the job then but that helped enhance my resolve to continue," he says.

Usually, while the team digs a grave, at the local mosque the imam announces during one of the five daily prayers that a funeral will be taking place.

Many of the worshippers then go to where the body has been prepared for prayers - it is then transported to the graveyard for burial, often thronged by the mourners.

Once by the graveside, the shrouded body is lowered - it is covered with a layer of sticks and broken clay pots as a mark of respect. The grave is then filled to form a slightly raised bed.

After the rituals are complete and before the mourners leave, the graveyard keepers appeal for donations.

They were amazing people who loved what they did and have imbibed their children with this altruistic behaviour".

This is usually done by 72-year-old Inuwa Mohammed, the oldest worker at the cemetery, who explains the importance of Abdullahi family to the community.

He used to work with the cousins' fathers: "They were amazing people who loved what they did and have imbibed their children with this altruistic behaviour."

The little money collected will sometimes buy lunch for the crew - but is never enough for anything else. In order to survive, the family also has a small farm where they grow food.

The graves are recycled after 40 years, meaning land is not a big issue - but maintenance is.

"There is a lot that is lacking at the moment - we don't have enough equipment to work with, or good security," says Aliyu, the youngest of the cousins and who has worked there for 10 years.

He explains how part of the wall has collapsed, allowing those on the look-out for scrap metal to steal the grave markers.

Some of the graves have metal plates inscribed with a name and date of birth and death – though many do not as Islamic clerics do not encourage ostentation. Most are just outlined by stones and bricks or with a stick.

Either way, the cousins remember the location of everyone buried at the cemetery and can direct people if they have forgotten the location of a relative's grave.

Following the BBC's recent visit to the graveyard, they have seen a dramatic change in fortune.

The new local council chairman, whose office oversees the site, has decided to put them on the payroll.

"They deserve it, given the massive work they do every day," Rayyan Hussain tells the BBC.

"Graves are the final homes for us all and people who do this kind of hard work deserve to be paid, so my office would pay them as long as I am chairman."

Magaji confirms that the staff have started receiving a monthly salary for the first time:

The five oldest, including himself, are getting 43,000 naira (\$28; £22.50)

The others, including Abdullahi and Aliyu, are receiving 20,000 naira (\$13; £10.50).

The small salary now being allocated to the Tudun Wada workers is well below the national

minimum wage

This is well below the national minimum wage of \$45 a month, but Mr Hussain says he hopes to increase their allowance "with time".

He says it is regrettable that the graveyard was abandoned for years by previous local council heads.

He has plans to repair parts of the fencing, install solar lights and add security, the chairman adds.

"I am also building a room in the graveyard where corpses could be washed and prepared for burials, before now all of this had to be done from homes."

For the Abdullahi family, it is all welcome investment - and Magaji hopes it will ensure that one of his 23 children will one day become a custodian of the cemetery.

Public Notice

The family of late John Samari hereby announces the demise of Samari Michael Joseph which occurred on the 23rd of July 2024.