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Mediaage

Magazine

ISSN

March - April 2025 Edition

Stay Informed



I'm Not In A Challenge With Anyone But To Beat My Records - Hon. Ifeanyi Uzokwe

Nigeria Receives Over A Million Gavi-Funded Meningitis Vaccines

Focus on Legislators



Agro-Climatic Resilience in Semi-Arid Landscapes

Partners for a Greener Future: ACRoSAL and Nasarawa State Unite Against Climate Change



Our Uniqueness Is In Our Diversity - Dr Charity Akpambo



DR. MUSTAPHA ABDULLAHI, Leg. Council
NIGERIA'S FEDERAL ELECTRICITY
COMMISSION OF NIGERIA

Nigeria to Provide Two Megawatts Solar Hybrid System for Tertiary Hospitals – DG, ECN

About Us

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

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

We excel in boosting the public image of brands (public or private), which in turn improves public awareness of that brand.

This also strengthens the brand's culture, an important aspect of having a successful thriving structure.

We are also solid in syndicating stories across trusted, renowned print and online media platforms.

Our strength in creative writing is unrivalled. Our publications can also be seen on www.mediaageng.com

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Mediaage NG News

Stay Informed

Publishers Note

Welcome to the March - April Edition of Mediaage Magazine, our third for the year. It has been a worthwhile experience covering activities in the private and public sectors of the Nigerian society, making stories and 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.

Good representation in communities fosters inclusivity, strengthens social cohesion, and promotes understanding by ensuring that different voices and perspectives are heard and valued. It involves more than just numbers; it's about acknowledging and appreciating the unique experiences, backgrounds, and perspectives of all community members.

This edition began with a one on one session with Nigerian lawmaker, Honourable Ifeanyi Uzokwe who spoke on prioritizing the interests of humanity, placing human well-being and dignity at the forefront of decision-making. This includes considering the needs of all individuals and groups, promoting human rights, and working towards a more just and equitable world.

Other sectors this production covered include tourism, health, energy, technology and environment.


Enjoy a good read.

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Honourable Foluke Osafile
Amuwo Odofin 1, Lagos State

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Senator Diket Plang
Plateau Central Senatorial District

Hope For Victims Of Sickle Cell Disease - Nigerian Health Minister



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Future Focus Foundation




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Arc. Cecilia Atohengbe
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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 Abba Lawal - Nigeria's Minister of Environment



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



Technology on its Own Isn't Enough - Francis Dubois, Semens Energy, on Regional Collaboration, Cross-Border Energy Partnerships



ACRSAL Yobe State Governor Buz Lawaches Gully Control Project



When You Are Going Through Critical Challenges, It's Important You Listen to God's Instructions



Chairman, House Committee on Health

Hon. Amos Gumna Magaji
 Zanga/Kataf/Jabba Federal Constituency, Kaduna State.



A Comprehensive and Holistic Preventive Strategy Needed In Nigeria Against Gender Based Violence - Dorothy Njemanze



Preventing About Training A Child To Lead - Gosh Vireddy Okye



Leoluca Orlando Founder/Co-Editor of Mediapulse

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I'm Not In A Challenge With Anyone But To Beat My Records - Hon. Ifeanyi Uzokwe

Becoming productive and successful encourages one to improve on present and past



success stories. One can concentrate on becoming more productive and a healthy way to achieve this is to aim to surpass your personal professional best and strive to reach your maximum potential. These and others were some of the thoughts Hon. Ifeanyi Uzokwe shared with Mediaage in an interview. It also contains what led him into politics, his life prior to becoming a politician. He further spoke about the projects he has carried out for his constituency. Hon. Uzokwe is a Nigerian lawmaker, serving at the

country's lower chamber of its legislature. Excerpts.

Please, kindly introduce yourself to our readers?

My name is Honourable Ambassador Peter Ifeanyi Uzokwe. I represent the good people of Nnewi North, the Japanese capital of Nigeria, Nnewi South and Egwisigo Constituency. It may interest you to know that Nnewi North is the home of Chief Ojukwu, the first African billionaire, the one that gave Nigerian government his private vehicle to carry the queen around when she came.

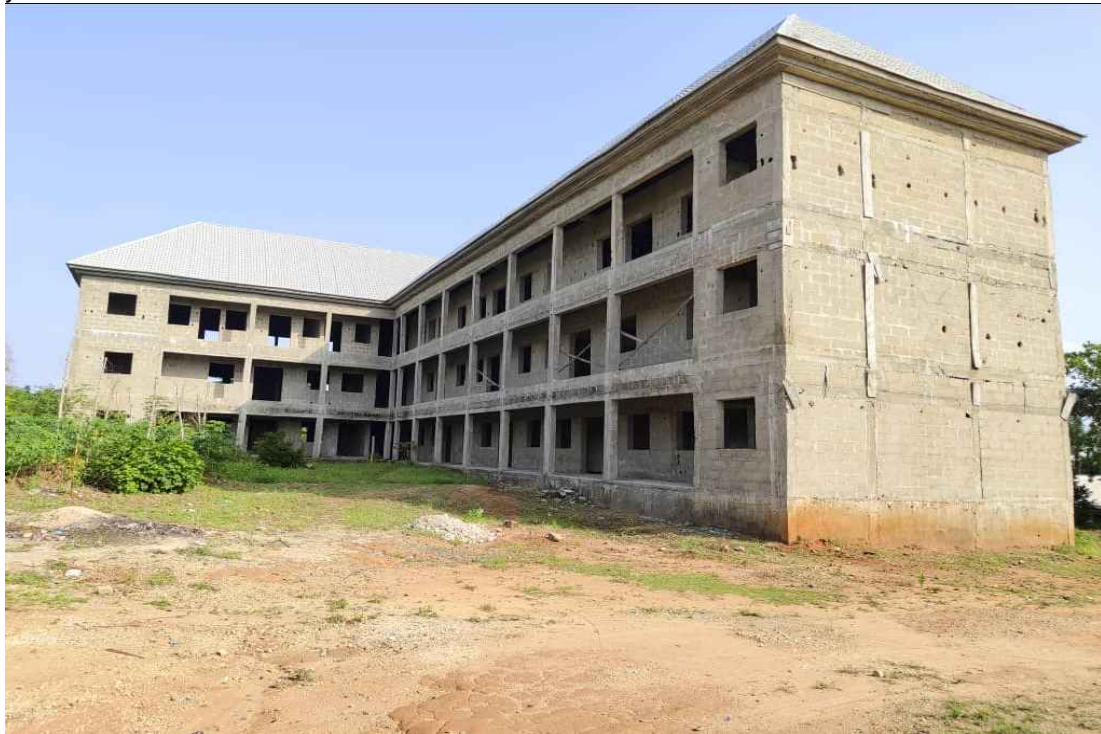
It's also a home to Ikemba Ojukwu, Sir Louis Ojukwu, Emeka Ojukwu, also Chief Ibeto Cletus, Omeka Nnaya, Innoson Motor Manufacturing Company, Chikason Group, Late Senator Dr. Ifeanyi Ubah, Senator Nwafor Orizu. In Ekwusigo, we have Sir Emeka Offor, Chief Jerome Udorji. In Nnewi South, we have Chisco, Chief Ani Egbunam. We have many of them. The first Aviation Minister, Chief Mbazirika Amaechi (late). We have many of them. We have Ekene Dili Chukwu, Late Chief Ubajiaka, the Chukwu Brothers. And, we have the longest serving Igbo in the South East, Pa Kenneth Orizu, still living in his nineties.

As with a strong constituency, you can see the challenges. One, the legacies they left behind is very tough and high. We can only try because, they handed over the baton to us. So, how

good to run the race depends on you. But, once you have sincerity and honesty of purpose, you will be applauded for trying your best. So, that is the preambles.

Thank you. I know you must have done a lot for your constituency. Can you tell us the ones that are groundbreaking for you, in comparison to what has been? What are the ones very key to your heart?

Honestly, I have done nothing, because February 8 was just barely one year I've been here (House of Reps). I did not call one other scheme. I was in court for almost one year after the court. We did rerun before coming to this place. I was inaugurated on 8th February, 2024/ but, I did not look back. I hit the ground running. When you are coming into this place, what are you



Ongoing building of the College of Medical Lab Sciences built by Hon. Uzokwe.

coming here to do? We are lawmakers, we should all get this right. We are not the executive that build roads, infrastructure, but we attract by getting feedbacks from our people because you know what they want. From there, you push it into different agencies and MDS budget. That is why I keep telling my colleagues that whatever is coming to them, always ensure it's with the caption "attracted by", not "I built a road".

Having said these, I noticed during the election, when you vote, you will be given a five kg of rice. That is always the norm. And you know what? People voted for me without collecting rice. I thought of changing the narrative by coming up with the 'Food On The Table Initiative' .

The effects of implemented policies may be telling on the masses but, it is not in the making of the President because, making these policies all came at once. That's the only part I can fault the President. He has the passion to fix Nigeria and hopes to make it faster to actualize that vision within four years.

That is why the floating of the naira, the removal of the fuel subsidy, and others, without commensurate measures for people to adapt, is hitting hard on the electorates.

I think you should know this, you can hold your local government chairman accountable, you can hold the governors accountable for the daily operations of the local and state governments. That is why my Governor Soludo that is doing marvelously well. You can work without borrowing money. Is borrowing the norm? Is it because when there is an economic crunch, you have money for bailout that makes borrowing the order of the day? No.

Peter Obi governed Anambra state without borrowing money. Governor Soludo is doing fantastic without borrowing money. Go to the state, you will see that it's a construction zone with quality projects. Shockingly, Soludo did not support me when I was vying for election, even in the rerun. I'm not from the same party with him, but we must do away with party rivalries and give credit to someone doing well. I am not the kind of person that feels because someone is not from the same political party as me, I should castigate him, no. Soludo is doing well, and I will campaign for him.

I decided that my my constituents will be gifted with rice three times a year - the New Year, Easter and Christmas festivities. I've done and will share another one during Easter celebration and Christmas in December. It's an initiative I tagged "**Food on the Table**". In as much as you built skyscrapers, you have to consider the stomach of your constituents - what we we call sto



College of Medical Lab Sciences still under construction.

mach infrastructure. They need to eat and be alive to make plans for the future.

The rice I shared, I did to opposition parties before mine. I shared to APGA (All Progressive Grand Alliance), APC (All Progressive Congress), Labor Party, PDP (People's Democratic Party), before mine, YPP (Young Progressives Party).

I got 25000 plus votes to be here, which are not all from my party. So, find out others that voted for you. A political party is a vehicle. Once elections are over, carry everybody along as your constituents. Work hard to convince people who say that you are not going anywhere

and in the next elections, they will be the ones working for you. That's my challenge.

Another one is to beat my records, I'm not in a challenge with anybody. It may interest you to know that the person sitting before you was once the President General (PG) of Ozubulu, that's where I came from. What I like about journalism is that if you want to find out about someone, all the lies and the truth, you will. Check me out in Ozubulu and ask if they know anyone called Asiwaju 'Asiwaju' Peter Uzokwe, you will be told that I was the best PG. I built one of the best Civic Center within two months, I reconstructed roads and instituted scholarships.

I turned around our hospital, the hospital I was born. I turned it around that today, it is one of the best. We built College of Medical Lab Sciences. It's completed now. During my tenure, we started it from scratch, it's a two story building. We started it from scratch before handing over. And, I did the first Security Summit. I bought and people gave me gift of vehicles for our security vigilante group. I bought Takuma that people thought we were buying for our Igwe or the office of the PG. The government did not give me a dime. As a matter of fact, when I was about handing over, the cost of winning (PG) election in Ozubulu is equivalent to winning a local government election. They thought that the government was giving me huge sums of money. They did not give me one kobo. But, when things are hard, you think outside the box? That's who you know and the ingenuity in you thinking outside the box.

Even with the PG election, my opponent, one of the strongest and richest men in my town was not on my side. "Peter is a good person. Peter will not steal your money, but I don't want him". Why? "Because, you won't stand on his feet", knowing how stubborn I am. I pondered and asked myself, is there anything I'm doing wrongly that would warrant such statement? Because, if you tell me to sit down here, I will ask for a reason why I should and if it is genuine, I will adhere.

And, with my background as as a Sociologist, before you say something, I had already known what you want to say. And having the background of UNILAG (University of Lagos), I don't think that somebody will push me.

Before coming into this place, I had my Masters in Criminology. Peeviously, in LASU (Lagos State University), I read History and International Relations. So, I don't know how somebody will push me into doing wrong. There is one cardinal thing I started doing, even when my mother was around. If I want to sit in any case, in the morning of that case, I will ask God whatever judgment I will give in this case, give it in my immediate family 10 times. It will guide me. But, if what I am going to say which might be a lie, but I never knew, do not let me do it. I say this because, whatever is before you is what you will pass judgement with.

Most times, people will say, lawyers are liars. It is not true because, it is the facts you lay before the Judge that is used to pass judgment. That is the reason you should get good lawyers, so that a complainant will not turn to be accused.

So, I will ask God please, if my judgment will be based on lie because I did not know, forgive me. In the course of it, show me the right way. They know me in Lagos. I will raise my hand in a meeting to say something and if we are still discussing same topic, I will raise my hand again to say please, what I said initially was wrong. This is the right position. People will ask what kind of man is this?

So let me go back to the sharing of rice. I want people to eat. When former President, Goodluck Jonathan said he went to secondary school with no shoes. I laughed because, he's

talking about shoes. I did artisan work for me to go to school, not even talking of shoes. His own was that he had school fees but, no shoe. I'm not talking about shoes, mine was finding money to go to school. My father died when I was seven months and I heard he was one of the richest before he died. Before my father died, he had five lorries but, his family took them and I became poor. That period, we ate rice in my house two times a year - Easter and Christmas. That was the background I had. I did well in secondary school and made my papers when I was in form 4. I've not drunk alcohol, not because I saw it as a wrong act, but my mates in school who drank at that time, had good background. It made ask, if I start drinking beer, where would the momey for the next come from? I'm not bragging about it, but that is the discipline I imbibed in life.

I'm a disciplined person, very, very disciplined. Before studying sociology, I had been an idealist and idealism has no place in sociology, so you have to be a realist. Coming from that background, you don't have to tell me what some families are going through. Even the President knows that people are suffering in the country, and he is working hard to improve the lives of Nigerians.

So, my Food On The Table Initiative aims to give people food first, feeding the masses. Nnewi is my constituency headquarters. I'm traveling to continue my one year celebration.

I built six blocks of classrooms there, St John's Primary School, in fulfilment of a pledge I made during elections, that if I win, I will attract the building of a school for them.



Six blocks of classrooms at St John's Primary School, Nnewi, attracted by Hon. Uzokwe

I'm going to hand over that school fully furnished. I've done cash

empowerment because, most times, people just need a sum as small as N50,000 to start a business and you thought what they needed was a huge sum. Within four months, we did cash empowerment of 50,400 persons. I want to keep that communal life. I will still carry out the Food On The Table Initiative during Easter celebration and I will be sharing 6000 bags of 10 kg of rice.

President Tinubu gave us fertilizers to give to farmers, it's an honour to have a connection with the president of the country. He gave us 50 bags. I told them this is what the President gave you. The picture of the President will still be on the bags.

I am a man of contentment. I'm okay the little I get for myself and immediate family. I have only a boy and three girls. One day, they will get married. So, what's the madness in buying 20 plots of land and having houses everywhere when there are poor persons around you? Even the Bible tells us that we have the poor people around us, what you do with them? The society we neglect today will fight tomorrow. If I neglect the children of the poor, they will be terribly traumatized that when I bring my children home, they will deal with them. So, is it not good that you let your children mingle with them? My Children usually ask me when are we going home (village).

Let me tell you a true story. Before I came here, my children normally spend the Christmas festivities in England. I'm a traditional cultured person, which is why I love spending the Christmas season in my village. I participate in masquerade activities. There was a day I was shocked when I didn't see my children for almost two days in the same house that we are staying. They went for masquerade activities, a toe back late, sleeping till the next day.

The next year, if I tell them you have to go to London for the Christmas, they will say no, we prefer going to the village. That's the truth. I'm not exaggerating. To an extent, my second daughter refused to travel back to Lagos after traveling to the village, that she wants to enroll in a local school there. When they travel to the village, convincing them when it's time to go back to Lagos becomes difficult, until you promise that they will be coming back to the village again. That's my joy.

Let me ask you, what does it take for an individual to live a fulfilled life? It's a rhetorical question. I still live in the flat I've been since 1999, three bedroom flat. Any position you see yourself has a terminal date. If by 2027, my people said I did well, I will be returned, else, I will go back.

This life is very simple, if you understand it. Look at the children of the elites in the past, are they making waves now? No. The children of the poor have taken over. If you build hundred houses for them, what are they adding to it? You are only making them lazy. They will continue selling those houses, while the children of the poor will continue buying those houses. The best legacy you can give to your children is the best of education. I always tell my children to get connection wherever they go to. My name has not began opening doors with the little that I've got. With your connection, let your name open doors. If you can't find a key that will open a door, mould your own key to open it. That's what I believe.

Time waits for no one. Procrastination is a lazy man's apology. Do it now. If they throw stones at you, pack them and do your building. That's me. I don't fear challenges, they bring the best out of you.

Project Operation Light Up My Constituency. If you were in my community last December, you would see that crime has reduced. We shared more than five hundred Solar Lights. Presently, I'm sharing in Nnewi South. In the 2025 budget, I have more than enough to light up my constituency, you don't need your head lamps to drive at night anymore. This year, I will pay for secondary school fees, JAMBITES, and WAEC fees for some members of my constituency who can't afford them.

There's a place I went for local government campaign, a boy walked up to me as I was about to enter my car. I brought out a thousand naira note to give him but, he said "uncle I don't need it. I want to pay my school fees". I paid his fees till the end of his secondary school and I've adopted him as my son. I will also see him through the university. Satisfaction of his immediate need was not his concern. God sometimes, speaks through people. If I did not do



Hon. Uzokwe with his adopted son.

that, God might not be happy with me. Through my party Chairman, he checks the boy to see how he's faring in school. So, I'm barely a year. I hope when I've made two years, you will come back and we will speak more. I will invite you during one of my projects this year. We have good places for you to stay when you come so we can work together.

Coming from a legal background, what inspired you to represent your people and be a politician?

Service. But, I don't like using the word 'service' most times because, if you ask anyone the same question, they will tell you same thing - service. Let me leave service aside and let my antecedents speak. Before I came here, I've been serving my people through community leadership. I dislike places where things are going wrong, where two persons gang up against another, I will follow it up. I'm an activist. Not only service but, to straighten the society to sit on justice, equity and fairness. If you have these three, service will naturally come and it covers seventy percent of service. Ask anyone, I hardly quarrel with anybody. They titled me in my town as 'Dike Udo Ozubulu' - **Brave man of peace.**

Shortly after the church massacre in Ozubulu where thirteen worshippers were killed, I became the PG. That was the last gun shots in that town and I didn't not take sides. I had a very young capable Igwe (Traditional Leader), filled with wisdom and does not set judgement based on money. So, I can say what propelled me into representing my people is equity, fairness and justice. I was the first Honourable Member that went to Channels TV to display my pay slip. I was sent here to make laws and my voice has been heard. The February 14th accident in Nnewi, I brought it to the floor got a legislative backing and budget came out because of the road. That's the reason I'm here.

MKO Abiola was given the title "**His Excellency**", recognising that he won the 1993 Presidential election. He was also titled GCFR and some other things named after him. What about the umpire Chief Humphrey Nwosu that stood before the military officers and said MKO Abiola won the election? When I remember that man, I feel sad. I brought it to the floor of the House of Representatives, my northern colleagues were applauding.

Naming the INEC (Independent National Election Commission) office **Chief Humphrey Nwosu House** and giving him a posthumous honour will be of immense appreciation to the late Nwosu. I recommended inviting him to every Democracy Day to honour him. He's from Ajala. I don't know who gave him my contact but, he called from the United States to say "my son, may God bless you. You are the person that could fight my case. I thought Nigeria that I suffered for will remember their heroes". Barely two months later, he died. I don't need more to live a contented life. So, what other attractions would make me to do things differently? I don't live a false life to proof that I belong somewhere. I live for humanity.

Thank you for your time sir.

You are welcome.



Focus on Legislators



Hon. Ime Bassey Okon



Hon. Mark Esset



Hon. Yinka Aluko

Focus on Nigerian Lawmakers

Mark Esset represents the people of Uyo/Uruan/Nsit Atai/Asutan/Ibesikp, from Akwa Ibom State.

A politician by calling, he's a businessman by birth. He's been into business before venturing into politics to serve his people. Life as a lawmaker at the state and local levels has been a

having
different

and

"It's not

great
from
Esset



wonderful experience, met people from religions and diverse backgrounds, culture different professions, according to him.

just a teleguided experience, it's been meeting professionals different fields", Hon. said.

When
challenges faced, he said;

asked **about**

"The challenges faced are in the culture and language difference. There are times you wish to speak other languages, apart from yours to be able to interact well with your colleagues. Besides that, I don't think there's any challenge.

Words of encouragement for other lawmakers.

"As House of Reps Members, we are seen as nationalists. Issues we discuss - those that centre on the development and progress of Nigeria, we should do our best to attract dividends of democracy to our constituencies.

"There's need for us to close ranks and make efforts to ensure that this God-given responsibility and the trust bestowed on us by our constituents, we don't disappoint them because, definitely, there will be a day of reckoning for assessment, through the ballot paper. If we pass the test, we will be sent back here.

"The 10th Assembly, led by Hon. Tajudeen Abbaa, christened "The People's Assembly", is doing its best. The resolutions made and the laws passed are people centred. So far, we have not disappointed Nigerians".

Constituency Projects



Hon. Yinka Aluko represents the people Ilorin East Federal Constituency, Kwara State.

Formerly a public servant, he never aspired to be a politician. He was in the public service when appointed a Special Adviser to a former Governor of Ogun State. From that position, he grew to become a full politician, engaged in contesting elections.

His views on corruption affecting all facets of the Nigerian society

"Nigeria is of age but, what is wrong with the country generally is the issue of corruption which must be severely tackled. It is not peculiar to any sector but, decadence in the society. If this government can tackle corruption squarely, Nigeria will be a better place. All our sectors are affected. We have to do things differently.

"If successive governments had come up with policies on agriculture to feed the nation, things will be a lot better. They've done Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Green Revolution, MAMSER and I'm sure they have one that's ongoing presently".

Advice to other lawmakers

"They are all from different states but, so far so good, as for the basic functions and responsibilities of lawmakers, they are doing well, representing their people. They come here to make laws and carry out oversight functions for the benefits of Nigerians. A better way to represent your people here is for your voice to be heard and the expectations of your people to be met".



Hon Aluko

Hon. Ime Bassey Okon represents the people of Itu/Ibiono Federal Constituency

Hon. Ime Bassey Okon is currently serving his first term as a member of the Nigerian House of Representatives,

of

Ibom served as State Ibom

a one Leader,

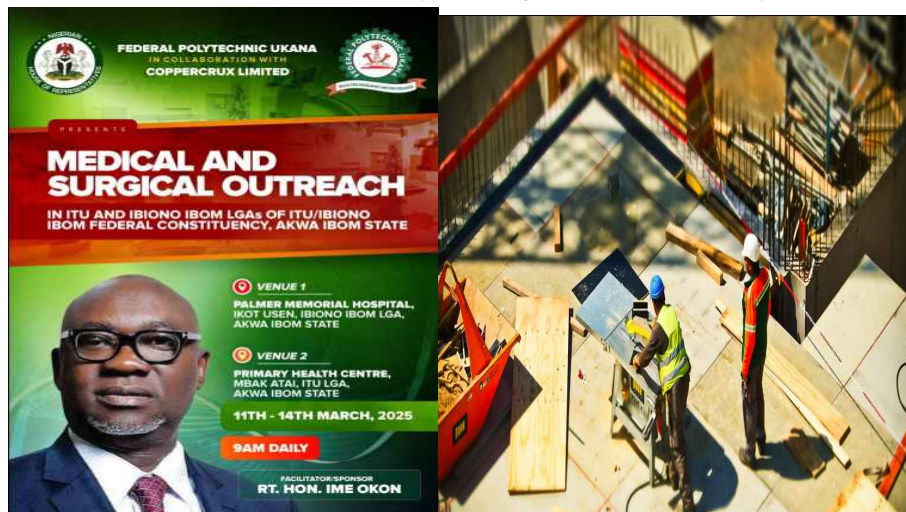
Some of has



representing the people Itu/Ibiono Ibom federal constituency of Akwa State. He previously a Member, Ibiono Ibom constituency of Akwa State House of Assembly, where he was time Deputy House also, Chairman, Committee on Information.

Technical classroom blocks at North Itam Primary School, the installation of solar-powered streetlights across some communities in the constituency and the construction of Joshua Uwa Street in Mak Itam 3.

Others include the National Health Insurance Scheme (nhis) Group And Individual Family Health Insurance Programme (gifship) Coverage For Itu Federal Constituency, Akwaibom State and sponsoring a 4-Day medical and surgical outreach for constituents.





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The Hidden Secret of Locust Beans

Paul fell in love with a beautiful lady, Amoyedo, from the Okun community. After months of courtship, they got married. The first meal his new bride prepared was Egusi soup with pounded yam, a staple among the Okun people. As Paul took his first bite, he was amazed—he had never tasted anything so delicious! Every meal Amoyedo cooked afterward was met with the same excitement and praise.

What was the secret behind her mouthwatering, flavor-packed meals? Locust Beans! Known as Iru among the Yorubas, Dawadawa among the Hausas, and Ogiri among the Igbos, locust beans undergo a lengthy process of cooking and



fermentation before they are used as a flavorful condiment. In the culinary world, its taste is classified as umami.

What is Umami?

Umami is often described as "meaty" or "brothy."

It enhances flavor, spreads across the tongue, lingers longer than other basic tastes, and creates a mouthwatering sensation. If you're looking for a naturally occurring umami boost in your meals, locust beans are the perfect choice!

Health Benefits of Locust Beans

Aids digestion and promotes gut health.

Rich in minerals that help treat diarrhea.

Acts as a natural laxative, aiding in constipation relief.

Contains anti-inflammatory compounds that help reduce inflammation.

May improve eyesight (a reason my mother always insisted we add Iru to our meals!).

Helps in the treatment of respiratory infections.

Has healing properties for skin infections, wounds, and sores.

Protects cells from damage, contributing to overall well-being.

More Insights on Locust Beans (*Parkia biglobosa*)

The locust bean tree, native to the West African forests, is incredibly valuable. Every part of this tree serves a purpose:

Fruits: Encased in a yellowish pulp, the sweet and meaty fruit can be eaten fresh as a snack or used to prepare a refreshing drink.

Seeds: Fermented and used as a cooking condiment. When roasted, they release a coffee-like aroma, serving as a natural coffee substitute.

Leaves: Applied to sores, ulcers, and wounds due to their healing properties.

Roots & Bark: Decoctions made from these parts are used to treat skin infections.

Trunk: The wood is valuable for construction and furniture-making.

The Economic and Environmental Concern

Despite its numerous benefits, the locust bean tree is gradually going extinct due to deforestation. With growing global awareness of healthier living and a shift toward natural condiments over overly processed products, the demand for locust beans is rising. In the coming years, Iru may become one of Nigeria's most sought-after export commodities.

But will the country harness its economic potential? Or will we let this invaluable tree disappear due to neglect?

A Call to Action

The locust bean tree is beneficial yet neglected. We must take action to preserve it for future generations.

Next time you're cooking and want to enhance both flavor and well-being, remember to add locust beans to your meals!

Foluke Olajide, Mother Nature.

Glaucoma A Leading Cause of Irreversible Blindness In Nigeria - Nigeria's Health Minister

Glaucoma, a viscous eye disease is the leading cause of irreversible blindness in Nigeria and globally. It is also the second commonest cause of blindnesss.

This is according to Nigeria's Minister of State for Health and Social Welfare, Dr. Iziaq Salako, who revealed this in a press briefing at the Ministry's headquarters in Abuja, in March, ahead of the 2025 World Glaucoma

Week (WGW), aimed at educating the public about glaucoma, and the importance of regular eye check-ups.

WGW is a global initiative of the World Glaucoma Association, and the World Glaucoma Patient Association designed to raise awareness on glaucoma directed at patients, policymakers, eye-care service providers and the public.



During the briefing, the Minister represented by Dr. Michael Akpan, Director Port Health Division of the Ministry, said glaucoma is found in approximately 60.5 million persons globally, a data the Minister said the Ministry is well aware of, while about 87% of the figure are found in developing countries.

The Minister also stated that the Ministry has over the years supported and implemented targeted screening, public awareness programs, advocacy, improving patient journey through health system, leverage on technology and setting research priorities to improve patient outcomes.

"More recently, the Ministry, following a rigorous and collaborative process developed and launched the National Glaucoma Screening and Treatment Guidelines", Dr. Salako said.

"These guidelines have been distributed to all states of the federation and the FCT. The document provides clinical and programmatic guidance for screening and management of glaucoma.

"Guidance on the setting up of patient support groups that put the patient at the centre of their care, improves access, increase adherence to lifelong management and improve their empowerment and social connections for improved outcomes is an important feature", he enumerated.

To stop the threat of glaucoma, Dr. Salako said the Ministry, through the National Eye Health Programme (NEHP) is implementing on behalf of the Nigerian President, Bola Tinubu, the Effective Spectacle Coverage Initiative Nigeria (ESCIN) also known as JigiBola 2.0. The initiative aims to provide free vision screening and distribute 5 million pairs of reading glasses free to Nigerians in the next 3 years.

Following the launch of JigiBola 2.0 in 2023, the NEHP has been working in partnership with local and international partners including the Livelihood Impact Fund, Restoring Vision USA, and The Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI) to scale up access to reading glasses in Nigeria for improving livelihoods particularly for persons 40years and above through the primary health care system.

So far, over a 100, 000 Nigerians have been screened and over 80,000 spectacles dispensed. The sustainability approach involved the setting up of vision centres

where spectacles are provided at a subsidized rate. So far 3 States have been covered.

The system strengthening arm of the presidential initiative (Jigibola 2.0) has facilitated the integration of Primary Eye Care (PEC) into the Primary Health Care (PHC) System by empowering PHC workers in 15 states with the knowledge and skill to manage simple eye care conditions including dispensing of simple reading glasses, offer first aid and eye health education using the National Primary Eye Care Trainer and Trainee manuals. The PEC integration also aims to improve the referral system between the 4 levels of health care—community, primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

Glaucoma is an eye condition that damages the optic nerve resulting to loss of peripheral vision in the beginning, and blindness at advanced stages. It is also described as "the silent thief of sight" as it develops slowly, and vision can be greatly impaired before any signs or symptoms are apparent.

WGW is an annual event held every second week of March. The theme for this year is "Uniting for a Glaucoma Free World; See the Future Clearly".

The goal is to lay emphasis on the importance of regular eye checks and early diagnosis of this largely asymptomatic and devastating disease, thus preserving the vision of those affected.

Building A Sustainable Future: A Strategic Pathway to Innovation and Development through Sustainable Solutions Through Renewable Energy - ECN Boss, Dr. Abdullahi

In an era where technological innovation shapes the destiny of nations, Nigeria stands at a crossroads. With pressing challenges in infrastructure, economic stagnation, security threats, unemployment, overstretched education sector and energy security threats, the urgency for transformative solutions has never been greater.

Fortunately, the world has offered a roadmap—developed nations have harnessed technology, particularly a sustainable solutions through Renewable Energy Technologies to meet the global energy demand and drive unparalleled progress.

For
solution is
but a
are to
hurdles
energy
the most
where
can drive



Nigeria,
embracing this
not an option
necessity if we
leapfrog
development
and secure a
prosperous
future. One of
crucial areas
technology
impact is
infrastructure.

Countries
and China

like Germany
have built

efficient, sustainable urban systems powered by renewable energy. Smart grids, solar-powered street lighting, and energy-efficient transportation networks have not only improved connectivity but also reduced costs. Nigeria can replicate this by investing in decentralized solar energy solutions to power rural communities, reducing reliance on a single grid.

Imagine a Nigeria where every major road is well-lit by solar-powered LED lights, where government buildings and industrial parks run on hybrid renewable energy sources—such a reality is within reach with the right policies and investments.

Through the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR, a clear roadmap to achieving a sustainable future in the Country has been demonstrated. Practical steps have been taken to implement this agenda like the development of the first Gazetted National Energy Policy and its implementation plan.

These strategic initiatives have shown a clear roadmap for sustainable energy solutions. Other Government initiatives include localisation and domestication of renewable energy solutions in the country, setting up industries and factories for the local production of renewable energy products like

Solar PV panels and Batteries leveraging on the country's rich natural resources and raw materials.

The ECN is currently developing a large scale Solar PV module assembling plants, a modular Green Hydrogen plant and a Bio-Methanol plant. These projects will provide more access to energy, reduce the cost of energy and guarantee energy security in the country. Economically, renewable energy is a game-changer. This, I have always maintained.

Nations like Sweden and Denmark have successfully built thriving green economies by integrating solar, wind, and hydro energy into their industrial frameworks. Nigeria, blessed with abundant sunlight and vast water bodies, has already begun to tap into these resources to create jobs, reduce energy costs, and attract foreign direct investment. Take Morocco's Noor Ouarzazate Solar Complex, the world's largest concentrated solar farm—it has not only provided energy security but has also created thousands of jobs.

Nigeria's potential to replicate such feats is immense, specifically in the northern region, where solar intensity is at its peak. Security and job creation are two intertwined issues that technology can help resolve.

In countries like Israel and the United States, renewable energy is made to power the security systems, from AI-driven surveillance to drone technology for border control. Nigeria can adopt similar measures by integrating solar-powered security cameras in high-risk zones and using tech-driven agricultural solutions to create jobs and reduce youth unemployment which is one of the major causes of insecurity.

With over 60% of Nigeria's population being under 25, training programs in sustainable solutions like solar panel technology, smart agriculture, and energy management can create employment opportunities, while simultaneously addressing our power deficit issues.

Education and general development also stand to benefit from this technology-driven approach. Countries like Finland and South Korea have transformed their education systems through digital tools and smart classrooms powered by renewable energy. Imagine a Nigeria where every rural school has uninterrupted electricity from solar microgrids, where students in remote areas have access to digital learning platforms.

This is achievable with strategic partnerships between the government, private sector, and international organizations. As the Director-General of the Energy Commission of Nigeria (ECN), one of the major player in the energy sector, I am pleased with the innovative policies, strategic partnerships and intentional financing made available by Mr President, H. E. Bola Ahmed Tinubu, under the auspices of the "Renewed Hope Administration."

The inclination and efforts of Mr. President through the Ministry of Innovation, Science and Technology, where the Honourable Minister, Chief Uche Nnaji, holds sway, signal hope, and stand commendable.

At this juncture, it is pertinent to announce a very critical project initiated by the Federal Government towards improving the energy supply and demand gaps through renewable energy sources.

The Federal Government has recently appropriated funds for 'Solarisation of critical infrastructure across the country' to the ECN. This project will be fully implemented by the ECN. Critical Infrastructures like Universities, teaching hospitals and other public institutions will benefit from this solarisation initiative.

Specially, upto to 2 megawatt solar hybrid mini grid of power will be installed in every federal government

institutions and hospitals across the country (36 states including FCT). The Energy Commission of Nigeria has began energy audit across the universities and medical institutions to determine the energy needs of the institutions.

This project is aimed to be completed before the year ends. By investing in renewable energy technologies and smart technology solutions, Nigeria can accelerate its development trajectory, ensuring a future that is not just sustainable but also prosperous for generations to come.

Engr. Mustapha Abdullahi, PhD, FNSE, CEng, MIMechE Director-General and Chief Executive Officer, Energy Commission of Nigeria (ECN), Abuja, Nigeria.

WORLD AUTISM DAY: 'Kanye Turned Creativity Into Powerful Voice for Inclusion' – Minister of Art, Culture, Tourism and Creative Economy

Nigeria's Minister of Art, Culture, Tourism and Creative Economy has described the creativity of 15 year old Kanye Okeke can be turned into a powerful voice for inclusion.

Hannatu Musa Musawa said it also shows that talent has no boundaries and can erase impossibilities.

"If I can say that there was one person that really, really inspired me to know that within the art structure, there is hope for the future of Nigeria, it was Kanye. The inspiration I got in the interacting with him really gave me the knowledge that there is much power even in disability and creativity", she said on Wednesday at the World Autism Day in Abuja.

"There is no excuse for failure. If Kanye can do it,

you can", the Minister added.

Kanye's artistic skills were spotted still a child, when making expressions using colours in painting. His painting that attracted the Guinness World Record (GWR) measured 12,303.87 m² (132,437 ft² 116.85 in²).

Adjudicator, Glenn Pollard commended the feat set by Kanye who began the paintings last November.



"Your paint on the canvass of 12,303.87 m² smashed all records in November last year. This is your certificate Kanye, for your

fantastic record, on behalf of the Guinness World Records, I will say you were exceptionally amazing and well done for your achievement", he said.

In attendance was the Osama of Asaba, Chief Chuck Nduka-Eze; Mother of Art Guinness World Records, Dr. Silva Okeke; Minister of Art, Culture,

Tourism and Creative Economy, Barr. Hannatu Musa Musawa; Mr. Tagbo Okeke and Former Chairman, Police Service Commission, Chief Simon Okeke.

Others include Senator Victor Umeh; 2023 presidential candidate of the Labour Party, Peter Obi; Chief of Defence Staff, General Christopher Musa represented by the Chief of Defence Civil-Military Relations at the Defence Headquarters, Rear Admiral Olusanya Bankole.

World Autism Day is commemorated on every 2nd of April.

Nigerian Government Commits to Implement NHFRA's Report

The Nigerian government has revealed that it is committed to study and implement recommendations presented in a report by the Committee on Establishment of National Healthcare Facility Regulatory Agency (NHFRA).

The country's Minister of State for Health and Social Welfare said it validates the importance of the overarching objective for setting up the proposed Agency.

Dr. Iziaq Salako revealed these while receiving the report from the agency.

The body is mandated to provide a framework for the establishment of a National Healthcare Facility Regulatory Agency NHFRA.

In a press release by the Health Ministry, issued by the Director, Press and Public Relations on Thursday, Dr. Salako said the government understood the need to have an independent body that will address the gaps of standards and

quality existing in health sector.

"The whole essence is for us to proof that these are standards of practice in the country and have a body that can support states in their regulatory activities in registering facilities, and have some levels of monitoring of compliance to set rules", he said.

The Minister promised professional bodies within the Health Sector that NHFRA will not be a mechanism to witch-hunt any professional leader or take up the work of an existing regulatory body.

Permanent Secretary of the health ministry, Daju Kachollom mni, acknowledged the timeliness of the NHFRA, describing it as a visionary response to longstanding gaps in regulating both public and private healthcare facilities across the country.

Represented by Pharmacist Olubunmi Aribéana Director Food & Drugs Department of the Ministry, she commended the Dr. Richardson Ajayi led committee whose work began in September 2024, culminating in a comprehensive report that not only outlines the framework for NHFRA, but also includes a draft establishment deal, resource mobilisation plan and implementation strategy.

Presenting the report, the Chairman Committee for the Establishment of National Healthcare Facility Regulatory Agency NHFRA Dr. Richardson Ajayi said the proposed regulatory agency aligns with the government's commitment to achieving Universal Health Coverage UHC and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by ensuring that all healthcare facilities meet fundamental standards of care.

Nigeria Receives Over A Million Gavi-Funded Meningitis Vaccines

WEST AFRICA: Africa's most populous nation, Nigeria has received more than a million doses of the pentavalent meningococcal conjugate vaccine (Men5CV) from the Gavi-funded global stockpile, to fight

the deadly outbreak of meningitis in the northern part of the country.

Meningococcal meningitis is endemic across the African meningitis belt, and spans around 26 countries. It is an infection of the protective membranes around the brain and spinal cord.

Caused by meningococcus C and W strains, over 70 lives have been lost to the outbreak and more than 800 cases reported across 23 states in the country.

The newly arrived Men5CV will support an emergency vaccination campaign targeted at people aged 1 to 29 – the group most severely affected. The campaign is set to begin in Kebbi and Sokoto states, with Yobe to follow as more doses arrive.



“This is a crucial milestone in Nigeria’s response to meningitis outbreak, health minister, Prof. Muhammad Ali Pate said in a statement.

“It reflects our commitment under President Tinubu’s Renewed Hope Agenda to protect the health of all Nigerians, particularly the most vulnerable,” he said.

“With support from Gavi, WHO, and UNICEF, we are not only containing

today’s outbreak but also laying the foundation to eliminate meningitis and strengthen routine immunisation”.

UNICEF Nigeria Representative Cristian Munduate said the arrival of Men5CV was a vital step in protecting children and young adults from a life-threatening illness.

“UNICEF is supporting rapid vaccine deployment, community engagement, and planning alongside Gavi, the National Primary Health Care Development Agency and the Federal Ministry of Health,” she said.

World Health Organization (WHO) Country Representative, Dr Walter Kazadi Mulombo said the Men5CV vaccine is pivotal to Nigeria’s long-term health security. “We are committed to supporting the government to prevent future outbreaks and protect future generations”, he said.

Francisco Luquero, Gavi’s Head of High-Impact Outbreaks, noted that previous vaccine campaigns had eliminated meningitis A in Africa’s meningitis belt.

“Now we are expanding efforts to tackle other deadly strains. Continued investment is critical to protecting progress, controlling outbreaks, and reducing the impact of this disease on families and communities,” he pointed out.

Nigeria Inaugurates Committee for National Dialogue on Power In Health Sector

In order to boost power supply in health institutions across the country, the Nigerian government has inaugurated a committee for national dialogue to explore different public-private partnership models, develop business cases, and draw up strategic plans of engagement that will attract investments and boost the capacity of the health sector.

Other aims of the dialogue include to assess the existing power policy environment in ascertaining the urgency of the energy needs of healthcare facilities in the country, in relation to what is obtainable from other Low-Middle-Income Countries (LMICs), gather

field experiences of the current power situation and eliciting practical recommendations and best practices, identify alternative and sustainable solutions by exploring renewable energy options, backup power systems, and energy-efficient solutions to enhance power reliability, agree on mechanisms to strengthen public-private partnerships for electricity supply to public

the health ministry in March.

Dr. Salako said the dialogue will attract experts from the health and power sectors, with participants carefully selected from a list of mapped stakeholders, based on their level of interest and influence.

The committee is expected to ensure effective implementation of recommendations from the



health institutions in the country, amongst others.

These were revealed by the Minister of State for Health and Social Welfare, Dr Izaq Salako in a press release by

National Dialogue, mobilise resources and attract investments for sustainable electrification of public healthcare facilities, using a whole-of-government approach.

Taraba State ACRoSAL Day: Gov. Agbu Kefas Unveils Climate-Smart Initiatives, Empowers Taraba Farmers

Taraba State took a significant leap towards a sustainable future yesterday as Governor Dr. Agbu Kefas launched three groundbreaking initiatives under the Agro-Climatic Resilience in Semi-Arid Landscapes (ACReSAL) project.

The ACRoSAL Day celebration, held in the state capital, marked a major milestone in the state's journey

towards climate-resilient agriculture.

Governor Kefas, who welcomed dignitaries and stakeholders to the event, emphasized the state's commitment to sustainable development and environmental stewardship.

At the heart of the celebration were three critical initiatives designed to empower Taraba farmers and promote climate-smart agriculture. The first two initiative involves the distribution of climate-smart farm inputs and tractors, which will enable farmers to enhance production and build resilience against climate change.



The third initiative focuses on the presentation of Community Resolving Funds (CRF) to dedicated farmers and community leaders. According to Governor Kefas, the CRF is more than just financial support; it represents the state's steadfast belief in community-driven growth, which is at the core of the ACREsAL project.

The CRF is designed to foster economic empowerment, improve agricultural practices, and build a strong, resilient community that forms the bedrock of the state.

Governor Kefas expressed his gratitude to the World Bank and the Federal Project Management team for their dedication, expertise, and robust support. He reiterated the state's vision for a future where sustainable agriculture fuels economic growth, every farmer has the opportunity to prosper, and innovative practices become the norm.

Dr. Joy Iganya Agene, Task Team Leader of the ACREsAL project and Senior Environmental Specialist, expressed her delight at the significant progress made by Taraba State in the ACREsAL project. This

progress has propelled the state to stage two of project implementation.

She emphasized that ACREsAL is a crucial initiative in the fight against climate change, particularly in Taraba State, which boasts the third-largest landscape in Nigeria. The state's vast natural resources, often referred to as "nature's gift to the nation," make it an ideal location for this project.

However, Dr. Agene noted that Taraba State is facing numerous climate change-related shocks, including land degradation, water scarcity, and reduced soil productivity.

"These shocks are degrading our land, drying up our water bodies, and raising concerns about water scarcity," she said. "But there's good news – ACREsAL is here to address these challenges."

She urged beneficiaries to utilize the proceeds from the Community Revolving Funds (CRF) disbursement for climate-smart activities. Dr. Agene also encouraged communities to harness their abundant natural resources to combat the challenges posed by climate change.

Abdulhamid Umar, National Project Coordinator of the ACREsAL Project, emphasized the alignment of ACREsAL's mandates with the Taraba State Government's initiative to provide a green environment.

He noted that ACREsAL is a community-based project aimed at empowering and revolutionizing local communities.

The ACREsAL team was in Taraba to support His Excellency to unveil the community revolving fund scheme that is community-focused, as well as climate-smart agricultural inputs and tractors. These efforts aim to enhance food security and promote a sustainable environment. He appealed for sustainability and resilience at the community and household levels for the sustainability of the environment.

His Royal Highness Manu Ishaku Ada Ali, the Aku-Uka of Wukari and Chairman of the Taraba State Council of Chiefs, emphasized the importance of protecting the environment. He described the environment as a precious gift from nature that requires our utmost care and attention.

According to His Royal Highness, the state government is taking proactive steps to address environmental issues, with the ACREsAL Project being a key initiative. He highlighted the project's positive impact on the state and its potential to provide alternative solutions to mitigate the effects of global warming.

His Royal Highness urged the Governor to strengthen collaboration with ACREsAL, stressing the need for collective action to preserve the state's forests. As Taraba State deepens its collaboration with the World Bank, Governor Kefas urged stakeholders to harness the momentum of the ACREsAL project.

"Together, we can build a future where children inherit a landscape of opportunity, productivity, and environmental stewardship, he said".

With the ACREsAL project already making waves in the state, Governor Kefas' commitment to sustainable agriculture and environmental stewardship has sent a strong message: Taraba State is ready to take its rightful place as a leader in climate-resilient agriculture.

ACReSAL...greening the environment,saving lives.

Cultural Diversity is Our Uniqueness - Dr. Charity Akpambo

Every culture offers unique norms, values, and practices that enrich our global community. Embracing and celebrating cultural diversity, especially from a young age, opens doors to a world of understanding, unity and acceptance. fosters tolerance, respect, and a more inclusive environment, leading to greater productivity. What better way to introduce children to this view of culture than through the coming Children's Day celebration! It's a journey that prepares them for a successful, interconnected future. In this interview with Dr. Charity Akpambo, the founder, Icherry Travels and Global Concepts, she spoke on how diversity in society and uncover why embracing cultural diversity is a pivotal part of a child's development.

Let's meet you please.

My name is Dr. Mrs Charity Azunna Akpambo, founder Icherry Travels and Global Concepts, FCT Coordinator, Tourism Volunteers Network, Facilitator of Greentime Sustainable Initiative. I'm a business woman who's so passionate about the tourism industry, management, as well as sustainable



environmental conservation. I'm versatile because I'm a training coach. I train on office professionalism and business development.

I graduated from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, where I studied Chemistry and Science Education, and did my Masters at the Department of Science and Environmental Education, at the University of Abuja. I'm a Fellow of the Institute of Corporate Administrators of Nigeria, I have a Doctorate Award from the Institute of Leadership Manpower and Management Development (ILMMD), I'm a Management Consultant from the Centre of Management Development in Nigeria, I'm a member of the Chattered Institute of Loan and Risk Access Management of Nigeria, and some other organisations.

I believe that learning is a continuous process, we keep learning and unlearning. I have some certifications in International and Strategic Human Resource Management, Certificate in Diploma in Business and Entrepreneurship.

Your professional experience.

My career began as a youth corp member while serving with the defunct Oceanic Bank (today's Ecobank). Having been retained by the bank, I worked in the Business Development Unit. I moved to Diamond Bank where I worked as an Exclusive Account Officer, dealing with high network customers, business development and retail banking. I worked with the Industrial and General Insurance (IGI) as a Senior Executive. So, I have an insurance background, banking background and professionally, educational

background.

Having these backgrounds and being a Chemistry graduate, what led you to establish Icherry Travels and Global Concepts? Or what led you into tourism?

It had to do with my passion. I like to travel and explore. I look at the tourism industry differently from how people see it. For tourism to thrive, it has to be sustained. So, I see business development as a catalyst for sustainable tourism and I have that business development background already, educational background, added to my love for tourism.

Putting everything together, that's why you see that my company is not just a travel company, it has to do with global concepts. The global concepts is where the impacts come in, impacting the young generation, the community and the tourism industry.

How has the impacts been to the society and those you've worked with?

To understand sustainable tourism, you need to have a focus to minimise the negative impacts that may lie ahead and been able to maximise the benefits for the local community or environment. For you to do that, you have to actually involve responsible management of resources, conservation of natural resources and cultural heritage and supporting the local economy. So, for me, I think it's been great. I began by organising educational programmes, creating awareness and advocating for sustainable tourism practice, organising programmes for children, impacting the future generations because I believe that tourism and child education go together. We need to educate the children on what they have to know and what's actually going on in the society. They need to be reminded that they are the future leaders, they are the explorers and custodians of the planet, imbibe the culture of making them appreciate what they have around them.



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"I like to travel and explore. I look at the tourism industry different from how others see it. For tourism to thrive, it has to be sustained. So, I see business development as a catalyst for sustainable tourism and I have that business development background already".



Dr. Cherry
Founder, Icherry Travels and Global Concepts.

For me, tourism cannot do without the environment. Environmental sustainability is what promotes tourism. If you have beautiful landscape, hills and they are not kept clean or conserved, tourism will not prosper. We need to educate the children that the environment need to be clean for them to appreciate and take ownership of it. How do they take ownership of it? By preserving it. When they do that, it will be publicised. People will come to see it and it's a way of growing the economy when people pay to visit such places. It will also lead to job creation. You have your guards there, story tellers too. So, when people come, they will be told what each facility in that community represents and the natural resources they have. That's what brings people there.

Also, in tourism, another empowerment you can create for the locals is through their small businesses. When you go to a place like Dubai, you buy their sunglasses, hats, things that will make you identify with

the environment there and blend into what they already have in existence. You are paying for those things there and enjoying yourself and having fun. It's an experience which is a lifetime .

Educating people on the importance of tourism, beginning with the youth, going to the communities and the government overemphasized. In to the government to challenges they are identified with From there, they can better the environment.

From what you've shown that tourism on other sectors of a education. We have coming up on May programs outlined for

Definitely, we do. We Carnival. We always the Independence Day,

Day, we do programs depending on the theme of the event as it aligns with our company objectives. So, for the Children's Day, we have carnival which will be happening at the El-Amin International School. We've sent out letters to about 37 schools in the FCT. The aim of the programme is not just to have fun but, to do so while learning creativity for the children. We are doing that to promote both peace and unity, cultural diversity. The theme is Unity in Diversity. Students will engage in activities such as essay writing. We are promoting one voice, one nation, which is the Nigerian dream. The Nigerian dream is the future that we are looking out for. The kids will write essays on this theme. They will also engage in extracurricular activities like sports and you know it brings unity as well, children displaying their talents and confidence. There will be essay on literature, science like renewable energy, environmental consultation so that the children will be able to build something that can bring solutions to environmental problems.

There will be a cultural parade displaying the uniqueness in our diversity. Different attires will be worn that tell us more about our culture. We will be having games, fashion parade. These are what define us. It provides the opportunity to learn of other cultures and have the knowledge that it's important for us to live in peace and respect each others' culture because our diversity is our uniqueness.

These are lofty ideas coming from a brilliant mind. However, have there been challenges faced and how have you been able to summount these challenges?

Well, every business has challenges. Most challenges are financial. Putting up these programmes from organisations is actually not easy financially. Most times, the government and private sector are actually meant to support these initiatives but, that support is not really coming and it's a very huge challenge. So, we are using this forum to appeal to organisations that have corporate social responsibility and branding. Sometimes, you write to organisations but they don't respond to you. They should look to be assisting, especially when they see that you are impacting lives, something that's good for the economy of the

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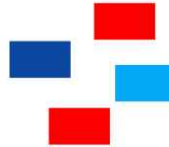
"The government should create an enabling environment for businesses and programmes like this to thrive. Little things of this nature for the children make a whole lot of sense. For example, the Children's Day coming up, we can have the Minister of FCT in attendance because, his presence will mean a lot.



Founder, Icherry Travels and Global Concepts.

"We can have him give prizes and awards to kids that came tops in essay writing and other competitions. That will be a lifetime experience and transformation for them. It will be a very big source of encouragement as well".

Dr. Mrs. Charity Akpamgo was speaking ahead of the Children's Day celebration coming up in May, calling for more support from the Nigerian government.



cannot be our programmes, we go hear from people what facing so it can be solutions mapped out. make policies that can

spoken so far, it has can have a ripple effect nation's economy, like the Children's Day 27th, do you have the children?

have our Children's Day promote global dates like International Women's

country. You are not just educating, you are creating an empowerment for the community. So, it is something that's worth supporting.

The government should create an enabling environment for businesses and programmes like this to



thrive. Little things like these for the children make a whole lot of sense. For example, the Children's Day coming up, we can have the Minister of FCT in attendance because his presence will mean much. We can have him give prizes and awards to kids that come out tops in essay writing and other competitions. That will be a lifetime experience and transformation for them.

Dr. Akpamgbo speaking at the World Wildlife Day, held every 3rd of March, during a paper presentation on the importance of finance in

wildlife and the innovations to promote wild life awareness and environmental protection.

It will be a very big source of encouragement as well. So, that's one of the challenges - sending representatives for events. Representatives are just like them but, once in a while, on very special occasion like the children's day, their presence are needed. These are key stakeholders and their presence will serve as inspiration. We are appealing to them that as they get our letters, they should honour the invitation in person.

Talking about this, have you been able to partner with government establishments to aid your cause?

Yes, we've been able to and we really appreciate some government establishments that have been partnering with us. First of all, the Ministry of Tourism. They've been a major supporter of what we do. Also, the National Park Service, headed by the Conservator-General, Dr. Ibrahim Goni. We have also done events with the National Children Park and Zoo, the Federal Ministry of Environment because we also do tree planting events. Also, the FCT Department of Tourism, they've been supportive. The National Orientation Agency, they've been attending our programmes. We have the Park and Recreation, they are always there. We also have companies like the Nigerian Breweries who have been very amazing. They are one of the companies that whenever we call, they are always there to support with drinks. These are some of the organisations that we've been partnering with and we really appreciate their presence.

We are having our Women International Conference which will hold from the 4th of July, 2025, with the theme Empowered Women, Empowering Women: Raising The Bar and Empowering Humanity. It will be a two day programme that celebrates women's contribution in various fields. It will be an engaging and insightful function where women will be contributing and empowerment going on in various fields, promoting equality, leadership and humanity. The objective is to enhance knowledge and create a network of women that will lead to empowerment and be a role model for future generations. We are bringing in women from all walks of life to grace the occasion

Thank you for your time.

You are welcome.

'How I Survived Attack That Killed My 16 Friends'

A Nigerian man has told the revealed how he managed to survive an attack on his hunting party that left 16 of his companions dead, and shocked the nation.

The group of young men, mostly in their 20s, was



travelling in the back of a truck when they were stopped by vigilantes.

"They asked us to alight from the vehicle and without saying much, one of them hit our leader on the shoulder with an axe," Abubakar Shehu, 20, told BBC Pidgin.

"Then they started beating us. I was able to dodge a couple of punches and tackles and ran as far as I could.

"I fell into a ditch, got up and was able to hide in an unused property for many hours before coming out around 10pm," he said.

While hiding, he could hear the shouts and cries of his friends as they were being

beaten and then burnt to death.

"I could hear all the noise from what has happening and I was scared for my life. Thankfully no-one saw me," Mr Shehu said.

He then returned to the road,

where he was able to stop a truck and the driver picked him up and took him to safety.

Last week's gruesome attack on the group from northern Nigeria heightened tensions across the country. They had spent several weeks travelling in the south hunting wild animals to sell, and were going home to celebrate Eid.

Amnesty International and other rights groups have called on the authorities to make sure justice is served.

President Bola Tinubu also condemned the killings, saying that Nigerians had the right to move freely anywhere in the country. He ordered security agencies to find the killers, adding that "jungle justice" had no place in the country.

Police say they have arrested 14 people in relation to the case and many across the country will be closely following to see how the case

pans out.

Relations between northern and southern Nigerians are fraught following years of clashes between northern animal herders and southern farmers over access to water and grazing land, which have left thousands dead.

Along with the lack of security across Nigeria, this is one of the reasons why residents of Uromi town in Edo state, and many others, have set up vigilante groups.

The hunters from the northern Kano state were armed with traditional rifles but they say they showed licences for these weapons when they were stopped by the vigilantes.

For the family of the victims in Toronkawa village, the cries and mourning continue more than a week after the horrific incident.



Adama Ali, the mother of one of the victims, is devastated. "I kept calling his phone but no-one was picking up," she said, tears rolling down her cheeks.

Earlier this week, Edo state governor Monday Okpebholo visited his Kano counterpart to try and ease tensions. He also paid his condolences to the victims' families and promised them compensation.

Having lost so many of its young men, the village is still in mourning as everyone knows the victims. Their families houses are full of guests paying their condolences.

The chairman of the villages' hunters association, Mustapha Usman, said nothing would please them more than seeing justice served.

Mr Shehu agrees.

"I thank God for sparing my life and bringing me back home and I pray for those that lost their lives," he said.

The BBC

After Eight Years, Nigerian Evangelist Freed From South African Prison

After spending eight years in jail, a Nigerian televangelist accused of raping young women from his South

African church has been found not guilty of all charges. Timothy Omotoso had denied the 32 charges in a trial that was broadcast live and gained huge interest across the country.

In 2018, one witness told the court she had been raped by the pastor - who ran a church in the city of Port Elizabeth - when she was 14 years old.

When delivering the verdict on Wednesday, the judge presiding over the trial said that Mr Omotoso had been found not guilty because prosecutors had mishandled the case.

South Africa's National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) shared a similar assessment, saying that "former prosecutors in the case acted improperly and the accused were not sufficiently cross-examined by the state".

The NPA said it would now "consider its legal options" and that the drawn-out nature of the trial was partly down to Mr Omotoso filing numerous legal challenges.

For his part, Mr Omotoso told the media he thanked God for the verdict.

His co-accused, Lusanda Sulani and Zikiswa Sitho, were also found not guilty.

Mr Omotoso was dramatically arrested at an

airport in 2017 as he sought to leave the country.

His trial was the first prominent rape case to be impartiality and whether justice is best served by having television cameras in courtrooms.

Following Wednesday's verdict, Mr Omotoso will be



deported to Nigeria, South African media outlet News24 reported.

Partners for a Greener Future: ACREsAL and Nasarawa State Unite Against Climate Change

In a move to boost Nasarawa State's resilience against climate change, the Agro-climatic Resilience in Semi-Arid Landscapes (ACReSAL) project has reaffirmed its commitment to supporting the state's efforts in addressing pressing environmental issues. During a recent courtesy visit,

broadcast live in a country where sexual violence is rampant.

The hearings attracted huge Abdulhamid Umar, National Project Coordinator of ACREsAL, congratulated Barr. Isaac Danladi, the newly appointed Commissioner for Ministry of Environment and

Natural Resources Nasarawa State, on his well-deserved appointment.

Umar took the opportunity to brief Danladi on ACREsAL's objectives,

institutional arrangements, highlighting its mission to combat land degradation and climate change across 19 states in Northern Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory.

As a key beneficiary of the ACREsAL initiative, Nasarawa State is poised to benefit significantly from the project's community-driven and multi-sectoral approach.

Mr. Umar outlined the ACREsAL Project's four interconnected components – *Dryland Management, Community Climate Resilience, institutional strengthening and project management and contingent emergency response which

interest, and raised difficult questions about victims' rights,

are designed to promote climate-resilient agriculture, sustainable land management, and improved livelihoods for rural communities.

He emphasized the importance of collaborative efforts between the ministries of environment, agriculture and water resources and other sectors for project sustainability.

The NPC expressed optimism that the environmental landscape would benefit significantly from the effective leadership of Barr. Isaac Danladi.

Danladi, accompanied by Mr. Napoleon Gyobe Elias, Nasarawa State Project Coordinator of ACREsAL, commended the ACREsAL project's commitment to supporting the state's climate resilience efforts and commended ACREsAL for its remarkable achievements so far.

He echoed the Government's readiness to act as a bridge between ACREsAL and vulnerable demographics in Nasarawa State, ensuring that all initiated projects are carried to a successful conclusion.

I Scarred My Six Children by Using Skin-Lightening Creams'

A mother in northern Nigeria is visibly upset as she clutches her two-year-old child, who has burns and discoloured skin on his face and legs.

The 32-year-old used skin-whitening products on all six of her children, under pressure from her family, with results that she now deeply regrets.



Fatima, in a green and pink

patterned robe, holds her two-year-old child in a yellow T-shirt. She is surrounded by her other five children - four girls wearing different coloured heads and a teenage son in a red T-shirt. They all have their backs to the camera so you cannot see their faces.

Fatima, whose name has been changed to protect her family's identity, says one of her daughters covers her face whenever she goes out in order to hide her burns.

Another was left with darker skin than before – with a pale circle around her eyes, while a third has whitish scars on her lips and knees.

Her toddler still has weeping wounds – his skin is taking a long time to heal.

"My sister gave birth to light-

skinned children but my children are darker skinned. I noticed that my mother favours my sister's children over mine due to their skin tone and it hurt my feelings a lot," Fatima says.

She says she used creams she bought at her local supermarket in the city of

Kano, without a doctor's prescription.

A close-up of a teenage girl, wearing an orange headscarf, mainly showing her lips which have patches on them as a result of skin-lightening creams. One of Fatima's daughters has marks on her lips as a result of using the creams.

At first it seemed to work. The grandmother warned towards Fatima's children, who were aged between two and 16 at the time.

But then the burns and scars appeared.

Skin-whitening or lightening, also known as bleaching in Nigeria, is used in different parts of the world for cosmetic reasons, though these often have deep cultural roots.

Women in Nigeria use skin-whitening products more than in any other African country – 77% use them regularly, according to the UN World Health Organization (WHO).

In Congo-Brazzaville the figure is 66%, in Senegal 50% and in Ghana 39%.

The creams may contain corticosteroids or hydroquinone, which can be harmful if used in high quantities, and in many countries are only obtainable

with a doctor's prescription.

Other ingredients sometimes used are the poisonous metal, mercury, and kojic acid – a by-product from the manufacture of the Japanese alcoholic drink, sake.

Dermatitis, acne and skin discolouration are possible consequences, but also inflammatory disorders, mercury poisoning and kidney damage.

The skin may become thinner, with the result that wounds take longer to heal, and are more likely to become infected, the WHO says.

Zainab Bashir Yau

A lot of people link light skin to beauty or wealth. Women tend to shield, as they call it, their children from that discrimination by bleaching them from childbirth”Zainab Bashir Yau

Nigerian dermatology clinic owner

The situation is so bad that Nigeria's National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (Nafdac) declared a state of emergency in 2023.

It is also becoming more common for women to bleach their children, like Fatima did.

“A lot of people link light skin

to beauty or wealth. Women tend to shield, as they call it, their children from that discrimination by bleaching them from childbirth,” Zainab Bashir Yau, the owner of a dermatology clinic in the capital, Abuja, tells the BBC.

She estimates that 80% of the women she has met have bleached their children, or plan to do so.

Some were bleached themselves as babies, she says, so are just continuing the practice.

One of the most common ways to tell whether someone is using skin-whitening products in Nigeria is by the darkness of their knuckles. Other parts of people's hands or feet get lighter, but knuckles tend to remain dark.

However, smokers and drug users also sometimes have dark patches on their hands, due to the smoke.

So users of skin-lightening products are sometimes mistakenly assumed to belong to this group.

A woman wearing a lilac dress holds up her bleached hands to show the contrast between her darker knuckles and areas of paler skin.



Colour contrasts on bleached hands are sometimes thought to resemble the marks found on a drug addict's hands

Fatima says that is what happened to her daughters, aged 16 and 14.

“They faced discrimination from society – they all point fingers at them and call them drug addicts. This has affected them a lot,” she says.

They have both lost potential fiancés because men do not want to be associated with women who might be thought to take drugs.

I visited a popular market in Kano, where people who call themselves “mixologists” create skin-whitening creams from scratch.

The market has a whole row of shops where thousands of these creams are sold.

Some pre-mixed varieties are arranged on shelves, but customers can also select raw ingredients and ask for the cream to be mixed in front of them.

I noticed that many bleaching creams, with labels saying they were for babies, contained regulated substances.

Other sellers admitted using regulated ingredients such as kojic acid, hydroquinone and a powerful antioxidant, glutathione, which may cause rashes and other side-effects.

I also witnessed teenage girls buying bleaching creams for themselves and in bulk so that they could sell them to their peers.

A salesperson wearing white rubber gloves at a market in Kano mixes an orange substance in green plastic bowl to create a skin-lightening product.

Market salesmen use powerful substances to mix skin-lightening creams – adapting them at the request of customers

One woman, who had discoloured hands, insisted that a seller add a lightening agent to a cream that was being mixed for her children, even though it was a regulated substance for adults and illegal to use on children.

“Even though my hands are discoloured, I am here to buy creams for my kids so they can be light-skinned. I believe my hands are this way just

because I used the wrong one. Nothing will happen to my children,” she said.

One seller said most of his customers were buying creams to make their babies “glow”, or to look “radiant and shiny”.

Most seemed to be unaware of the approved dosages.

One salesman said he used “a lot of kojic” – well over the prescribed limit – if someone wanted light skin and a smaller quantity if they wanted a subtler change.

Fatima holds her toddler's head up to show the weeping sore on his chin caused by skin-lightening products

Fatima's toddler still has sores on his face from skin-lightening products that are taking time to heal

The approved dosage of kojic acid in creams in Nigeria is 1%, according to Nafdac.

I even saw salesmen giving women injections.

Dr Leonard Omokpariola, a Director at NAFDAC, says attempts are being made to educate people about the risks.

He also says markets are being raided, and there are efforts to seize skin-lightening ingredients at Nigeria's borders as they are

brought into the country.

But he says it was sometimes hard for law-enforcement officials to identify these substances.

“Some of them are just being transported in unlabelled containers, so if you do not take them to the labs for evaluation, you can't tell what is inside.”

Fatima says her actions will haunt her forever, especially if her children's scars do not fade.

“When I confided in my mum about what I did, due to her behaviour, and when she heard the dangers of the cream and what stigma her grandchildren are facing, she was sad that they had to go through that and apologised,” she says.

Fatima is determined to help other parents avoid making the same mistake.

“Even though I have stopped... the side-effects are still here, I beg other parents to use my situation as an example.

The BBC

**Borno State
Governor Warns of
Boko Haram
Comeback**

The Governor of Nigeria's

Borno state has warned that jihadist group Boko Haram is making a comeback, after its fighters staged a series of attacks and seized control of

The Nigerian government has downplayed the governor's fears, saying security in the country has improved in the last 18 months.

Borno state has been at the centre of a 15-year insurgency by Boko Haram, which has forced more than two million people to flee their homes and killed more than 40,000.

At the height of its insurgency in 2015, Boko Haram controlled huge areas in Borno state before being beaten back.

The militant group gained international notoriety in April 2014 when it kidnapped more than 270 schoolgirls from the town of Chibok, also in Borno state.

Following a relative lull, the militants have been targeting army bases, police stations and rural communities.

In January, an ambush by the Boko Haram breakaway faction, Islamic State West Africa Province (Iswap), reportedly killed at least 20 Nigerian soldiers, while another attack in the same period left 40 farmers dead.

Governor Zulum said it was disheartening that the group now attacked and kidnapped people in many communities almost on a daily basis.

In a meeting with national security officials, he said that Borno State was "losing ground," against the jihadists.

Security analysts say the concentration of soldiers in north-western Nigeria to deal with banditry and kidnappings has led to a reduction in the number of troops on the frontline with Boko Haram in Borno and other parts of the north-east.

some parts of the north-eastern state.

The Governor, Babagana Zulum called for more

military assistance for soldiers fighting the insurgency.

The fight against the militants became even more challenging after neighbouring Niger withdrew its troops from a regional force set up to tackle the jihadist group.

Another analyst, Hamisu Sani, told the BBC that it wouldn't be easy to defeat Boko Haram but it wasn't impossible.

"No matter how our military weaken them, they can always regroup and will remain a threat," he said.

"The solution would be to crush the fighters in their entirety - which is possible given the right support to our military."



Safe Motherhood A Moral Imperative and Cornerstone for Sustainable Development – Nigeria's Health Minister

Nigeria's Health Minister on Wednesday described safe motherhood is a moral imperative, cornerstone for sustainable development, and a critical measure of a country's progress.

Reaffirming commitment to ensure that no

woman dies while giving life, and every newborn is catered for, with care and dignity, Prof. Muhammed Ali Pate said governments, health professionals, partners, and communities must pride in a shared mission to make childbirth safe for every Nigerian woman, irrespective of her location, income, or background.

The Minister revealed these at the 2025 Safe Motherhood Day commemoration, themed "Innovating for Safer Birth: A Collective Responsibility to Crash Maternal Mortality".

"For too long, maternal and newborn mortality has plagued our communities, robbing families of their futures and undermining our collective potential. But, today, I am here to affirm that Nigeria is changing that narrative", Pate was quoted in a statement issued by the Ministry's Director of Press and Public Relations, Alaba Balogun, on Wednesday.

He also said through the launch of the Health Sector Renewal Investment Initiative, the government has made bold steps in addressing longstanding challenges in its health system, representing a new era of coordination, investment, and accountability.

The new initiative has amongst others, strengthened the Primary Health Care (PHC) system, ensuring greater access to quality maternal, newborn, and child health services, expanded coverage and availability of skilled birth attendants across underserved regions, expanded health insurance coverage in an unprecedented manner, and strengthening of National Emergency Medical Services and Ambulance System, with almost 23 states empanelled.

The event also witnessed the Launch of Key Policy and Guideline Documents, a response to emergencies, and building a resilient, people-centered health system that can anticipate and prevent emergencies. The documents include:

The Safe Motherhood Strategy (2024-2028) – our roadmap for coordinated, multi-level interventions to protect mothers' lives. The document also has national quantification of maternal health commodities (2024-2028)

Guidelines for the Management of Postpartum Hemorrhage (PPH) – to standardize lifesaving practices nationwide.

Preeclampsia and Eclampsia Guidelines – Targeted strategies for timely detection and effective management of hypertensive disorders in pregnancy.

Essential Gynaecological Skills Manuals – to enhance the competencies of health workers managing women's reproductive health.

The RMNCAEH+N Quality of Care Strategy – a framework to ensure respectful, rights-based, and high-quality care for women, newborns, children, adolescents, and the elderly.

National Training Manual for Doctors and Nurses on the Management of Obstetric Fistula: to provide global standards, user friendly training manual for doctors to provide holistic, respectful, simple, affordable, quality and evidenced based care that will improve quality of life for women and girls living with genital fistula.

Permanent Secretary of the Ministry said it is possible to have a country where no woman dies while giving birth, and seeing this come to fruition will require collective responsibility.

Daju Kachallom said the ministry has prioritised maternal and newborn health as a cornerstone for the country's health agenda, " a commitment evident in the policies we have championed, the partnerships we have cultivated, and the interventions we continue to scale".

She added that while Safe Motherhood Day is a celebration of progress made, and the resilience of mothers, healthcare workers, and communities who continue to push forward, it is

also a solemn reminder of the journey many women and girls take through pregnancy and childbirth—sometimes with risk, fear, and without adequate support.

Nigeria Expends N32bn for Basic Healthcare Intervention

Nigeria has disbursed N32 billion from the Basic Health Care Provision Fund (BHCPF) to improve healthcare services, disease control measures, primary healthcare funding, and emergency medical treatment.

The disbursement will be spread across states and local governments, including more than 8,000 primary healthcare centers in the country.

It will also effectualise access to healthcare services for the vulnerable that include women and children and improve response to disease outbreaks.



Prof. Muhammad Ali Pate, Nigeria's Health Minister, speaking during the 10th MOC in Abuja.

“It will fund the national ambulance scheme and emergency medical treatment, as well as, enhance the capacity of the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) to prevent and respond to disease outbreaks”, Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Prof Muhammad Ali Pate said at the 10th Ministerial Oversight Committee (MOC) meeting in Nigeria’s capital, Abuja.

While acknowledging existing funding gap, Prof. Pate said only \$2 million was gotten from international donors but, remained undaunted that treatment for TB, malaria and HIV/AIDS interventions will continue.

He admitted the availability of commodities in warehouses, and a waiver by the United States government to aid in treatment but, said Nigeria must through local content, accelerate its procurement processes.

“However, we may also have to procure from countries with economic conditions similar to ours rather than relying entirely on external funding”, the Minister said.

The 10th MOC dwelt on reviewing healthcare financing strategies for an efficient healthcare sector. It also witnessed the approval of a revised guideline for the Basic Health Care Provision Fund (BHCPF) for an equitable and sustained distribution of healthcare funding.

The funds are planned for distribution to health agencies that include the National Emergency Medical Services and Ambulance System (NEMSAS), the National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA), the National Health Insurance Authority (NHIA), and Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC).

The Hidden Myths of Flowers

The only class I truly enjoyed in primary school was Primary 1 Hibiscus. My teacher was a lovely lady, but what made that class unforgettable was the beautiful Hibiscus flower attached to it. The classroom was labeled and adorned with the flower, and perhaps that’s where my love for flowers first blossomed.

We often admire flowers for their breathtaking beauty, describing them as “a vibrant tapestry of colors,” “a symphony of fragrance and form,” or

simply "a sight to behold." However, beyond their aesthetic appeal, flowers play a significant role in enhancing our well-being, both indoors and outdoors. Here are some flowers to keep around—not just to appreciate their beauty but also to enjoy their many benefits.



Hibiscus flowers come in various shades, including red, pink, yellow, orange, and purple. There are different varieties, one of which—commonly known as Zobo in West African countries—is widely consumed as a refreshing beverage.

Benefits:

Hibiscus is packed with health benefits, including lowering blood pressure, supporting liver health, and providing antioxidants. It has also been used traditionally for digestive and skin health. However, it's best to consume the Zobo variety, as not all Hibiscus flowers are edible.



Rose – The Timeless Beauty

You cannot go wrong with a bouquet of roses! With over 150 species of wild roses worldwide, this beautiful flower—despite its thorns—is one of the most beloved for its elegance and fragrance.

Benefits:

Both rose petals and the buds (known as rose hips) are rich in nutrients. Roses promote glowing skin, ease premenopausal symptoms, boost mood, support the immune system, and aid digestion. They can be infused in water or oil for skincare or brewed into tea for health benefits.



Lavender – The Soothing Scent

This lilac-colored flower is cherished for its calming fragrance. Some varieties of lavender consist of only leaves but still carry the same soothing scent. Lavender is widely used in household products for its relaxing aroma.

Benefits:

Lavender oil has calming effects that support sleep, relieve menstrual pain, and reduce muscle pain and inflammation. It also possesses antibacterial and antifungal properties, helping to combat certain bacteria and viruses. Lavender leaves, flowers and oil are commonly used in skincare.



Marigold – The Bright Protector

Known for their bright yellow, orange, and gold petals, marigolds are popular in gardens for their vibrant colors and natural pest-repelling properties.

Benefits:

Some marigold species (such as *Calendula officinalis*) are edible flowers that can be used in salads or as a saffron substitute. Marigolds are also known for their anti-inflammatory and wound-healing properties. Additionally, they serve as excellent mosquito repellents and contribute to healthier skin.



Chamomile – The Gentle Healer

With delicate white petals and a yellow center,

chamomile emits a pleasant apple-like fragrance that attracts bees and butterflies. It has been used for centuries for both home decoration and herbal infusions, primarily in teas.

Benefits:

Chamomile tea aids those struggling with insomnia, promotes digestive health, alleviates anxiety and depression, helps regulate blood sugar levels, and treats mild skin conditions such as acne and dryness. However, pregnant women and individuals with severe allergies should avoid chamomile.



Aloe Vera – The Healing Succulent

While Aloe vera is classified as a succulent plant, it does produce flowers, although they are rare, especially when grown indoors. Despite its unusual appearance, it enhances any environment with its greenery.

Benefits:

Aloe vera, though very bitter in taste and slimy, is rich in antioxidants, relieves stomach upsets, helps manage diabetes, boosts the immune system, treats dermatitis, promotes hair growth, slows aging signs, heals sunburns, and accelerates wound healing. A unique advantage of keeping Aloe vera indoors is its ability to purify the air by filtering out toxins like formaldehyde and benzene.



Snake Plant – The Air Purifier

I wonder why it is also called "Mother-in-Law's

Tongue," is a low-maintenance house plant native to West Africa and boasts about eight different species. With its sword-like leaves, it thrives even in neglect.

Benefits:

Snake plants improve indoor air quality by removing toxins such as formaldehyde, benzene, trichloroethylene, toluene, and ammonia. They also release oxygen at night, promoting better sleep while reducing stress and anxiety.

Conclusion

There are countless other flowers with incredible health benefits and remarkable beauty. The next time a flower captivates you with its intricate design, take a moment to explore how it enhances both the environment and your well-being.

"What a lonely place it would be to have a world without a wildflower!" – Roland R. Kemler

Foluke

Mother Nature

Health

Fight Against Polio: Nigeria, Niger, Chad Launch Regional Vaccination Campaign

Ministers of Health from the Lake Chad Basin have launched a synchronized regional vaccination campaign aimed at protecting 83 million under 5 children.

According to a statement issued by the Nigerian health ministry, the initiative is crucial in the fight against variant poliovirus type 2 that has been a constant threat to millions of children across the region.

In the past 12 months, variant poliovirus type 2 has been detected both in the environment (wastewater samples) and among affected people in Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria.

A total of 210 detections have been reported across these four countries, 140 of which resulted in paralysis. Although no cases have been reported in CAR so far, these findings underscore the ongoing risk of cross-border transmission and the pressing need for coordinated regional action.

Over 50% of the polio cases reported in Chad in 2024 are linked to the strain circulating in Cameroon, underlining the importance of coordination and synchronization of polio response efforts. Nearly 12 million children were vaccinated last year through mass immunization campaigns to halt the spread of the virus.



Nigeria's Health Minister, Prof Muhammad Ali Pate vaccinating a child held by a woman.

To further strengthen immunity and curb transmission, a synchronized polio vaccination campaign will take place from 24 to 28 April 2025, targeting high-risk and mobile populations in border areas where surveillance indicators have remained below target. This campaign is part of a broader strategy to ensure all children are protected, regardless of location or movement patterns.

The round is supported by an estimated 1.1 million frontline workers (including vaccinators, social mobilizers, and monitors) dedicated to protecting every last child.

“The Lake Chad Basin remains a critical area in our fight against polio. By coming together as a region, we reinforce our commitment to ending polio once and for all”, the Chadian Minister of Health, Hon. Dr Abdelmadjid Abderahim said.

As part of the launch, the Ministers of Health will hold a closed-door meeting to discuss challenges, review epidemiological data, and strengthen cross-border cooperation. The event aligns with the Africa Regional Polio Eradication Action Plan and the Polio Eradication Cross-Border Coordination Plan 2024–2025, endorsed in August 2024 and updated in February 2025 to adapt to the evolving epidemiological situation on the ground—underscoring the region’s united commitment to protecting every child.

Global health partners, including WHO, UNICEF, the Gates Foundation, Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, and Rotary International, will join the effort, reaffirming their commitment to polio eradication. Community health workers, local leaders, and volunteers will also play a vital role in ensuring the campaign’s success. This event will coincide with African Vaccination Week under the theme ‘Immunization for all is humanly possible’.

The polio eradication initiative in the Lake Chad Basin demonstrates the power of collaboration in global health. By working together, governments, partners, and communities can ensure a polio-free future for children in the region and beyond.

The participating Ministers at the launch were Prof. Muhammad Ali Pate from Nigeria, Chad’s Abdelmadjid Abderahim and that of Cameroon and Niger Republic.

Nigeria to Launch Enhanced Import Clearance System

The Nigerian government is set to unveil a more robust and efficient system to improve the

import clearance regime towards full integration



with the National Single Window Project.

Director General, National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency, NESREA, Dr. Innocent Barikor, said this when he received in audience the Project Manager of the National Single Window Project, Dr. Tola Fakolade and his team at the headquarters of NESREA, in Abuja, the nation's capital.

Dr Barikor said the agency has scaled up its system to a dynamic model that would enhance the productivity of the agency as well as interface with other relevant systems such as the National Single Window Project and the B'Odogwu platform of the Nigerian Customs Service.

He commended the efforts by Dr. Fakolade and his team towards promoting a unified platform for trade facilitation, while restating NESREA's support for the process.

In his remarks, Dr Fakolade said the visit was part of engagements towards the onboarding of the agency into the single Windows platform.

China Hosts World's First Half - Marathon Race Between Humans and Robots

Robots have raced against humans in a half-marathon for the first time.

Some 21 humanoid robots raced alongside thousands of runners around the 21km (13-mile) course in Beijing, China, on Saturday.

Some of the robots that took part were as short as 3ft 9in, while others were as tall as 5ft 9in.

They had to resemble humans and be able to walk or run - wheels were not allowed.

The winning robot was Tiangong Ultra, which crossed the finishing line with a time of two hours and 40 minutes, while the men's winner of the race had a time of one hour and two minutes.

Tang Jian, chief technology officer for the creator of the robot, the Beijing Innovation Centre of Human Robotics, said its performance



was aided by long legs and an algorithm allowing it to imitate how humans run a marathon.

"I don't want to boast, but I think no other robotics firms in the West have matched Tiangong's sporting achievements," he said.

He added that the robot's battery was changed just three times during the race.

One robot fell at the starting line and lay on the ground for a few minutes before getting up and joining the race, while another crashed into a railing, causing its human operator to fall over.

The robots were accompanied by human trainers, with some physically supporting the machines during the race.



Several of the robots wore running shoes, with one donning boxing gloves and another wearing a red headband saying "Bound to Win" in Chinese.

Google Celebrates Earth Day 2025 With A Stunning Satellite-Inspired Doodle

On the occasion of Earth Day 2025, Google has unveiled a doodle that captures the breathtaking diversity of our planet through satellite imagery. The artwork, which reimagines the letters of "Google" using aerial photos from across the globe, reflects Earth's natural beauty while reminding viewers of the urgent need for conservation. Each letter showcases a different ecosystem, as explained by Google on the doodle's page. It contains images of coral islands, snow-capped mountains, arid deserts and dense forests. This year's doodle aligns with Earth Day's global theme, "Our Power, Our Planet", which emphasises the role humanity must play in steering the world towards a renewable energy future and safeguarding fragile ecosystems for generations to come.

What Google's Earth Day 2025 Doodle Shows

Each segment of the doodle highlights a different part of the Earth, photographed from space.

The first G spotlights the Maldives, famous for its coral atolls and pristine turquoise waters,

now increasingly vulnerable to rising sea levels.

This is followed by the alphabet O that captures the rugged, icy peaks of the French Alps, symbolising Earth's delicate alpine regions.

The second O showcases Cote-Nord in Quebec, Canada, revealing expansive boreal forests lining the St. Lawrence River.

The second G zooms into Mendoza Province, Argentina, where semi-arid landscapes depend heavily on Andean glacial melt.

The L is illustrated with the dramatic canyons and mesas of Southeastern Utah, in the United States, shaped over millions of years by tectonic forces and erosion.

The final E features the dry, resilient terrain of Western New South Wales, Australia, highlighting adaptation in harsh climates.

The Powerful Message Behind Google Doodle

Through this artwork, Google draws attention to the planet's interconnected ecosystems and the urgent threats posed by climate change. By using actual satellite imagery, the doodle offers a literal "view from above" that underscores Earth's vulnerability and the pressing need for collective action. It visually echoes the Earth Day 2025 message - that people everywhere have both the power and the responsibility to demand sustainable solutions.

Earth Day: A Growing Movement

Earth Day, which is celebrated on April 22 every year, is an event that is celebrated all across the world. The day is celebrated with the intention of creating an awareness about environmental issues among the masses. It is marked in over



190 countries, with people who care about the environment uniting regardless of nationality, politics or religion. The theme for Earth Day 2025 is "Our Power, Our Planet," emphasising the importance of renewable energy and collective action to combat climate change.

The female prisoners becoming football coaches



Five inmates at the Freetown Female Correctional Centre in Sierra Leone are seen from behind wearing grey polo shirts, light green shorts and green socks, but no boots, on a football pitch during a training session.

Female prisoners in Sierra Leone have benefitted from a coaching course run by the Confederation of African Football

After spending almost four years in prison in Freetown, football has provided Marie with the chance of a fresh start in life.

While behind bars at a correctional facility in Sierra Leone's capital, she enrolled in the first-ever coaching course for female inmates organised by the Confederation of African Football (Caf).

She was among 26 women and five police officers who took part in the Football for Reform initiative last year.

"Life in prison right now, the only thing you need is respect," Marie, whose real name was withheld by the prison authorities, told the BBC World Service.

"When you [have] respect, [it is] like you are not in prison."

The eight-day course equips inmates with a Caf-accredited D licence, a badge which enables them to coach football at grassroots level once they are released.

"It was more than the word great," Marie said.

"I am proud to get my certificate. With this coaching certificate, I want to be able to get a job."

Listen to Africa Daily: Can football help women prisoners get back on their feet?

About 80 women and their children are currently housed at the Freetown Female Correctional Centre according to AdvocAid, a non-governmental organisation in the West African country. But it is not just prisoners in Sierra Leone who have benefited from the Caf course.

It has also been held in Ghana, is under way in Liberia and there are plans to extend the scheme to other parts of the continent.

Isha Johansen, former president of the Sierra Leone Football Association (SLFA), pioneered the project after a visit to the correctional facility in Freetown.

"I saw very young girls there, an inmate with a baby on her lap and another pregnant," she told the BBC.

"90% of those inmates were in there because of poverty or petty crimes. They had no business being there.

"They are spending five, six or eight years doing nothing.

"I had to make a change. I was compelled to do something and football was a massive tool I had at my disposal."

Rehabilitation through football

Around 20 women are seen dressed in training kit, standing while holding up pieces of paper

displaying coaching credentials to cover their faces, while another woman is seen smiling and crouching in front of them. In the background on the wall is a banner featuring logos related to the Confederation of African Football and the Sierra Leone Football Association.

Inmates received their coaching qualifications at the end of the course - but their anonymity was ensured by Sierra Leonean prison authorities. With few facilities at Freetown's correctional centre, the first course was run on the AstroTurf pitch at the SLFA academy in the city.

The country's governing body also provided the inmates with equipment and jerseys. However, Johansen said the prison will now be investing in its own football pitch "in the next few months".

For those not keen on issuing instructions on the touchline, the Caf programme also offers other ways for inmates to get involved.

Some are now sewing jerseys and training bibs for clubs across the country.

"What I'd like to see is when these girls go back into society, they don't end up back in prison," Johansen said.

"When they come out, they've got skills. They can go to the football federation to look for a job and they can coach in schools."

Meanwhile, inmates in Nsawam - the largest female prison in Ghana with a population of 115 - also took to the football pitch in February.

The facility, located just to the north of the capital Accra, houses just over half of the country's female convicts.

Making positive social change

An instructor kneels down on a lush green pitch and talks to a group of six women during a football coaching course in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

Former Uganda international Majidah Nantanda offered instruction to inmates in Sierra Leone

"Being in prison here is very complicated for us," said one prisoner involved in the scheme in Nsawam. We are controlled on everything. It gives us a headache.

"But coaching is my passion, so when we heard about the course I was so happy to be part of it. We have learnt a lot of skills, like dribbling techniques."

Former Ghana international Mercy Tagoe, who represented her country at the 1999 Women's World Cup and has also coached the Black Queens, was among the instructors when the Caf course was run in Nsawam. She stresses how it can help inmates back into society.

"They can do something with this license. Once they leave prison they can start with the grassroots within their local area," Tagoe said.

"They go to prison to be reformed. So this course can help them move on with their lives."

Back in Freetown, Johansen is working with Caf and world governing body Fifa to see how the scheme can be implemented in other African countries - but also further afield in Asia and South America. Football, she believes, has the power to change the lives of young women in similar circumstances across the globe.

"It's about using football for positive social change," Johansen said.

"Football is so much more than just 90 minutes on the pitch. This is an example of that".

The BBC.

Nigeria to Provide Two Megawatts Solar Hybrid System for Tertiary Hospitals – DG, ECN

Nigeria aims to provide 2 megawatts of solar

Hybrid system in each of the 37 tertiary hospitals across the country, including the FCT.

This is according to the Director General of the country's Energy Commission who also said it plans to power up all government infrastructure with about 148 megawatts of clean, renewable energy, and 2 megawatts of clean renewable energy in its federal universities.

"Let me announce a novel solarization program called the Renewed Hope Solarization Project, for the provision of 2 megawatts of Clean Renewable Energy in Each of the 37 Federal Universities across the 36 states and FCT, Dr Mustapha Abdullahi, said at a press briefing on Friday in the Nigerian capital, Abuja.

Dr. Abdullahi revealed these while addressing the ₦10 billion approval for the provision of solar electricity for the Presidential Villa, stating that the project will lead Nigeria to energy prosperity.

"The recent approval of ₦10 billion for the provision of solar electricity for the Presidential Villa has stirred public debate. Some questioned its timing and necessity, interpreting it as a deviation from President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's campaign promise to provide stable electricity and prepaid meters to Nigerians, he enumerated.

"Before President Tinubu's administration, federal institutions in Abuja, including the Presidential Villa, owed the Abuja Electricity Distribution Company (AEDC) an eye-watering ₦47.1 billion in unpaid electricity bills. That energy bill, paid from taxpayers' money, is not sustainable", he stated.

Dr. Mustapha further said transitioning to alternative and sustainable energy sources reduces such burden and allows government institutions to become models of efficiency by cutting costs and enhancing reliable and sustainable governance.

"The move clearly intends to insulate Nigerians

from incessant high electricity bills, which underscores the President's commitment to cutting costs and reducing spending across public and private facilities.

"The Aso Rock Villa's solar power initiative sends a clear message to citizens, investors and global partners that Nigeria is ready to take control of its energy destiny. We must lead in Africa by utilizing more of the available resources in meeting our needs. Consequently, the gains go far beyond electricity.

"This initiative is not about lighting up the State House alone; rather, it's about a long-term energy vision; a vision where Nigeria breaks free from the cycle of energy debt and enjoys uninterrupted energy supply", he concluded.



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

Nigeria's Agric Ministry, NABG Partner to Drive National Food Security

Nigeria's Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (FMAFS) has pledged to collaborate with the Nigerian Agribusiness Group (NABG) to enhance food security, create jobs, and drive agricultural industrialization in Nigeria.

Minister of Agriculture and Food Security,

Senator Abubakar Kyari, made this commitment on Thursday during a courtesy visit by NABG's leadership, led by its President, Kabiru Ibrahim, in Abuja.

"I am confident that our deliberations will open up new pathways for collaboration, innovation, and measurable impact in Nigeria's food and agricultural ecosystem," Kyari stated.

He described NABG as a key private-sector player that unites stakeholders in the agribusiness space to grow the agricultural economy and lift millions of Nigerians out of poverty.

"As we work to implement Mr. President's Renewed Hope Agenda, agriculture remains central to our efforts to create jobs, reduce poverty, and ensure food and nutrition security for all Nigerians," he said.

Kyari stressed that achieving these goals requires "strong collaboration between the government and the organized private sector," identifying NABG as "a vital bridge in that endeavour."

The Minister outlined areas of cooperation with NABG, including strengthening public-private partnerships, supporting the adoption of agricultural policies such as the National Seed, Dairy, and Tomato Policies, and fast-tracking strategic frameworks like the Agricultural Commodity Standards and Grading System, Climate-Smart Agriculture Framework, and the National Integrated Agribusiness Agenda.

He also emphasised the importance of "deepening access to finance mechanisms for farmers and agribusiness operators" and reviewing outcomes from previous NABG initiatives that align with Nigeria's agricultural vision.

Kyari commended NABG's commitment to increasing private sector participation in agricultural policy and programme execution.

"This resonates with the country's drive to reposition agriculture as a business, not just a development activity," he said.

Minister of State for Agriculture and Food Security, Dr. Aliyu Abdullahi, reinforced the Ministry's stance, saying, "Agriculture is the future of the country."

He urged NABG to "strive to engage the government at all levels in setting policy directions and regulatory reforms to enable sustainable and inclusive socio-economic growth."

NABG President Kabiru Ibrahim reiterated the



group's vision of diversifying Nigeria's economy away from oil dependency.

"We are working together as stakeholders in the agriculture sector to drive agricultural industrialization," he said.

He also acknowledged government's role in creating an enabling environment for agribusiness to thrive.

Nigeria, UNEP Commits to Boost Chemical, Waste Management

The Nigerian government has reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening chemical and waste management across the country to protect public health and the environment, in line

with global best practices.

This was made known recently in Abuja during the inception workshop of a special United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) project on strengthening Nigeria's infrastructure and human capacity for sound chemicals and waste management.

The project is being implemented by the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA) in collaboration with UNEP.

The three-year initiative aims to bolster the capabilities of regulatory agencies, improve infrastructure, enhance collaboration among stakeholders, and develop effective chemical tracking systems.

Key outcomes include the automation of chemical monitoring, development of national regulations and standards, and upgrading of environmental laboratories.

Speaking at the event, Director General of NESREA, Prof. Innocent Barikor, represented by the agency's Director of Inspection and Enforcement, Dr. Christopher Beka, said the project marks a major step toward safer chemical management in Nigeria.

He said, "Nigeria, as a rapidly industrialising nation, faces escalating risks from improper chemical and waste handling. From industrial effluents to e-waste and expired chemicals, the threats to public health and socio-economic stability are real.

"This project is not merely a response to these challenges; it is a proactive step toward building a resilient system that safeguards our people, ecosystems, and future generations."

Barikor emphasized that the project aligns with global frameworks such as the Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm, and Minamata Conventions, reaffirming Nigeria's commitment to sustainable

development.

He added, "The objectives are clear—strengthen our laws, improve infrastructure, build capacity, and promote collaboration across all levels of society. We must work with urgency and shared responsibility to protect future generations."

Also speaking, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University of Lagos, Prof. Lucian Chukwu, welcomed the initiative as a timely intervention to harmonise fragmented efforts in chemical and waste management across various agencies.

He said, "We need appropriate guidelines and standardised models. This project offers an opportunity to train individuals and institutions so they can cascade knowledge across sectors."

In a related development, the UNEP-hosted Chemicals and Waste Youth Platform (CWYP) convened a virtual briefing to prepare young people for the upcoming 2025 UN negotiations on chemicals, waste, and pollution.

Zhanyun Wang, from the Secretariat of the Open-Ended Working Group on the Science-Policy Panel, said the session aimed to empower youth with knowledge on global chemical policy development.

"The youth need to understand the key issues and their role in driving change. This session is designed to equip them for active participation," he said.

Global Focal Point for CWYP, Shannon Lisa, also stressed the importance of youth engagement, saying, "We are bringing young people together to help shape negotiations that affect their future."

Head of UNEP's Chemicals and Health Branch, Ludovic Bernadat, called for inclusive efforts to tackle pollution.

He said, "Pollution is often invisible, but deeply

harmful. Addressing it chemical by chemical hasn't been effective. We need holistic solutions—rethinking production, promoting green chemicals, and encouraging circularity.

“Youth have a unique role—they communicate differently, innovate, and influence consumption patterns. They are key to ensuring change happens now, not tomorrow.”

The UNEP-backed project and youth engagement reflect Nigeria's growing focus on building a safer, more sustainable future through stronger chemical and waste governance.

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development, Architect Ahmed Musa Dangiwa, has issued a serious warning to developers handling the Renewed Hope Housing Projects across the country. He urged them to ensure timely delivery and strict adherence to quality standards.

A statement issued in Abuja in the month of April by the Director of Press and Public Relations of the ministry, Salisu Badamasi Haiba, quoted Dangiwa to have said this while speaking during a status review meeting with developers on ongoing housing projects in several states.

The Minister made it clear that the Federal Government will not tolerate negligence, substandard execution, or delays in project delivery.

“This administration is committed to doing things differently. Do not assume it's business as usual. It is not. If you signed a contract with the government, you must deliver accordingly,” the minister stated emphatically.

Nigerians Earning N30,000 Monthly Can Own A Home Under Renewed Hope Housing Programme- Minister.

Dangiwa declared that non-performing contractors risk being blacklisted, not just from future housing projects with the Ministry, but from all Federal Government housing and

infrastructure contracts. He also warned that any substandard structures discovered on project sites will be demolished and the responsible contractors sanctioned.

“We are not just building houses, we are building homes. If you collect government funds, you must deliver results. We will not fold our arms and allow incompetence or bad faith to derail the Renewed Hope Agenda,” he said.

While expressing appreciation for developers who have shown commitment and professionalism, the Minister reaffirmed the Ministry's determination to honour all contractual obligations, provided that quality and timelines are respected.

Human Capital Pivotal To Nigeria's Digital Growth - NITDA

To achieve a digitally empowered nation and to make Nigeria an emerging digital economy, human capital must be built on because, digital economy is knowledge-based.

These were the words of the Director General of the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) who also said Nigeria's greatest resource is human capital, not just mineral resources.

“We have to empower our citizens with the knowledge and skills needed to thrive in the 21st century and to achieve that, we developed the National Digital Literacy Framework with an ambitious target of achieving 95% digital literacy”, Dr. Kashifu Inuwa said at the climax of a two-day workshop on 'Building Sustainable Partnerships and Pathways Towards Achieving 95% Digital Literacy Level by 2030', in the month of April, in Nigeria's capital, Abuja.

“The framework has six competency areas, from building our citizens’ digital fluency on device operation and software to equipping them with the skills they need to manage information and also to develop data literacy”, he stated.

Inuwa further disclosed collaborative efforts with the Ministry of Education in infusing digital literacy and skills into the formal education sector in the country.

“Last year, they worked with the Nigerian Education Research and Development Centre to develop a curriculum for primary and secondary schools.

“Then we’ve done a pilot program with Nasarawa State University because we want digital literacy and skills to be a general study in our tertiary institutions. Cisco helped us to develop the content, and today all Nasarawa State students take that content as a general study, and they earn a credit for their degree as well.

“Now, we are working with the NUC to make sure all universities in Nigeria do the same thing. We are targeting to train 15 million students because by the time we embed digital literacy and skills into our formal education, all schools, from kindergarten to tertiary institutions, will have it as a mandatory subject for all students.

“Based on the rough data we have, there are about 15 million students in formal education. So if you embed that, it means in the next three years you will train 15 million,” he said.

Minister of State for Education, Dr. Suwaiba Ahmad, lauded NITDA’s ambitious initiative and called for robust and sustainable partnerships across government, the private sector, academia, civil society, and international development

partners.

“In today’s rapidly evolving digital landscape, literacy is no longer defined solely by the ability to read and write. It includes the capacity to navigate, to divide weight, and to create information using a range of digital technologies, she pointed out.



“At such, the pursuit of digital literacy for all Nigerians is not only timely but also essential. The goal of achieving 95% digital literacy by 2030 is visionary. It reflects a bold commitment to inclusivity, innovation, and national development.

“And to attain this milestone, we must foster robust and sustainable partnerships across government, the private sector, academia, civil society, and international development partners. As rightly mentioned by the DG NITDA, no single entity can drive this transformation alone. Our strength lies in collaboration”, the Minister enumerated.

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