

# The Executive

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NIGERIA GOVERNORS' FORUM

SUMMARY



## STATE GOVERNORS' BOLD MEASURES TO CURB INSECURITY

> 2024 National Budget: Weighing the Agricultural Sector



## Mainstreaming Security...

**S**corched by widespread insecurity negatively impacting both governance and the foundational structures of growth, state governors are speaking out and acting up to change the regressive narrative.

In different specific actions and action plans, the subnational leaders are synergising and actualising measures to curb kidnap-for-ransom, terrorism, banditry, insurgency, ritual killings and others by resolute non-state actors.

From stepping up partnership with federal security agencies, birthing state vigilante groups to pitching for state police, the fight against insecurity has become significantly mainstreamed in development discourse in the subnational space.

Across the states, the same concerns are being confronted. As Governor Dauda Lawal of Zamfara set up a 2,645-strong Community Protection Guards (CPG or Askarawa Zamfara), Governor of Gombe State, Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya, also Chairman of the Northern States Governors' Forum (NSGF), has put forward a fresh strategy targeting insecurity in the region tagged "4D."

Governor Uba Sani, Kaduna; Governor Abba Yusuf, Kano; Governor Lucky Aiyedatiwa, Ondo; Governor Peter Mbah, Enugu; Governor Bala Mohammed, Bauchi; Governor Caleb Mutfwang, Plateau; and many others are keying in. Our cover story captures this critical ferment.

Governor AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq, also Chairman of the Nigeria Governors' Forum, NGF, recently strongly condemned the killing of a traditional ruler in Kwara State, Peter Aremu, the Onikoro of Koro-Ekiti, by kidnappers, as "reckless, shocking, and abominable."

He charged the security agencies not to spare any resource to track down the perpetrators, free the spouse and others taken away, and bring them to book. His words: "We will certainly get the perpetrators and ensure that this is their last crime against humanity."

On a sad note, the NGF Media Team lost Mallam Isa Umar Gusau a brilliant, principled and respected media partner in January. After suffering a prolonged medical challenge, he passed on in an Indian medical facility.

Late Isa, a former Daily Trust journalist, was Special Adviser on Public Relations and Strategy to Governor Babagana Zulum of Borno State and served in the same capacity to the then governor of Borno State, Senator Kashim Shettima - now Vice President.

For the NGF Media Team, late Isa was not merely a spokesperson for his erstwhile principals' administrations, but a beacon of integrity and dedication in his role. His contributions to the NGF's monthly newsletter, "The Executive Summary," were always welcomed as his professional verve had always effortlessly enriched our pages.

Meanwhile, inimitable Prof. Abba Gambo, weighs the strategic agricultural sector vis-à-vis the N27.50 trillion 2024 national budget, teasing out a statistical dissonance against the backdrop of the Malabo Declaration which Nigeria is signatory to.

The sector got N362.94 billion allocation, a scenario that fell short of the Malabo Declaration's stipulation that, "All nations must commit 10% of their annual budget to the agricultural sector in order to boost food security."

On the PHC front, we explore how Nigeria can sustain the political will and commitment from government authorities, policymakers and stakeholders to end malaria as the nation still grapples with high morbidity and mortality rates related to the scourge.

The decline in cases and fatalities falls short of meeting the benchmarks outlined in the World Health Organisation (WHO) Global Technical Strategy for Malaria.

In our GENDER ISSUES segment, we present the First Lady of Kwara State and Chairperson of Nigeria Governors Spouses' Forum, NGSE, Ambassador Olufolake Abdulrazaq, who led other first ladies in a virtual meeting with UNICEF to address the scourge of female genital mutilation in Nigeria.

The highlight of the webinar attended by all States' first ladies was the presentation of the theme to commemorate the 2024 United Nations International Day of Zero Tolerance for female genital mutilation.

We also capture the remarkable, impactful journey of Gombe State First Lady, Hajiya Asma'u Inuwa Yahaya, a consummate I.T. specialist and unyielding advocate of girl-child education. Through her Jewel Care Foundation, she has indeed kept faith with her mission and the Foundation's motto of "Making a Difference."

On her part, the First Lady of the Akwa Ibom State Governor, Pastor Patience Umo Eno, declared that beneficiaries of the Empowerment Program for Mothers of Multiple Birth Children across the three senatorial districts of Akwa Ibom State are to receive stipends of fifty thousand Naira each for twins and One hundred thousand for triplets.

Also, Mrs. Mary-Maudline Nwifuru, the wife of the Ebonyi State Governor, birthed a free cervical cancer screening initiative for women – benefitting one thousand women in the state.

Please, read on.

### THE TEAM

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**Executive Director (Fin & Admin)**  
Abubakar JIBIA  
**Executive Director (Res & Str)**  
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**Social Media Officer**  
June IFEBE  
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**IT**  
Bassi HEMAN  
**Photo Editor**  
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# STRENGTHENING HEALTH SYSTEMS IN NIGERIA: THE INDISPENSABLE ROLE OF SUB-NATIONALS IN REALIZING NATIONAL HEALTH GOALS

By Maryam Musa Yahaya

The pursuit of universal health coverage in Nigeria, as encapsulated in the national theme "Health for All: Time for Action," necessitates a collaborative approach. The Federal Ministry of Health's latest endeavour, "Nigeria's Health Sector Renewal Initiative," underscores this need for synergy. At the heart of this collaboration lies the critical role of sub-national governments – the states under the able leadership of their Governors. In the complex landscape of Nigeria's health systems, the pivotal role played by sub-national entities is often underestimated. This article delves into the indispensable contributions of these regional players, shedding light on how their proactive involvement is crucial for realizing and strengthening the nation's overarching health goals.

### The Imperative of Sub-national Involvement

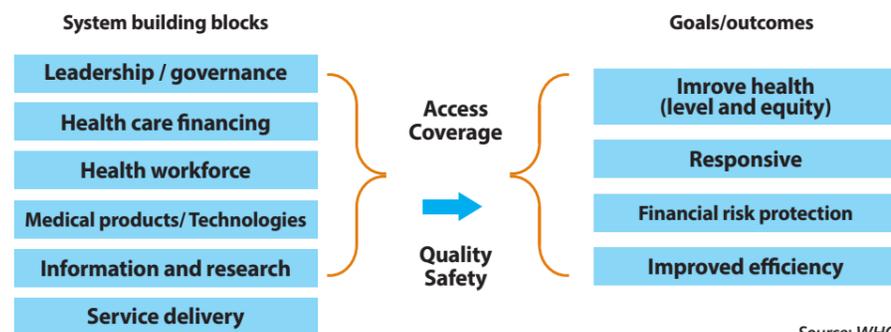
Healthcare in Nigeria is intrinsically linked to the actions and policies executed at the sub-national level. Governors and state health stakeholders are the key players in translating national health objectives into actionable results. By actively engaging sub-nationals, a formidable force is unlocked that not only addresses local health challenges, but ripples into a nationwide impact, which in turn forges a united front against healthcare disparities that will eventually propel Nigeria towards a healthier, more resilient future.

### Governors at the Forefront

Governors and state governments play a pivotal role in fortifying the health system by strategically addressing its six key building blocks. Allocating substantial budgets to healthcare, investing in infrastructure, and fostering collaborations with the private sector and NGOs are foundational steps. Adapting national health policies to local contexts and ensuring their translation to the lowest government level establish a robust framework.

Moreover, prioritizing healthcare workforce development, community engagement, and data-driven decision-making empowers sub-national entities to proficiently implement and monitor health programs.

By championing these comprehensive efforts, governors position their states as pioneers in achieving national health goals, thereby making substantial contributions to the overall well-being of the country.



– Source: WHO



### Embracing a Unified Approach in Health Systems: Aligning State-Level Initiatives with the Federal Vision

The recent unveiling of Nigeria's Health Sector Renewal Investment Initiative by the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare marks a transformative era in healthcare. Endorsed by the National Council of Health on December 12, 2023, this initiative is a testament to a new era of collaborative health governance. The signing of the health renewal compact underlines a unified front through the Sector-Wide Approach (SWAp), bringing together federal and state governments and development partners in a concerted effort to bolster Nigeria's socio-economic progress.

SWAp's introduction is a cornerstone in revolutionizing Nigeria's health system. It unites diverse stakeholders under a common goal, transitioning from the prior fragmented strategies that focused on short-term solutions and isolated health programs. This approach ensures that initiatives at the sub-national level are not only aligned with national health objectives but also contribute significantly to a cohesive health agenda.

This shift to a more integrated and inclusive health strategy through SWAp showcases Nigeria's dedication to building a resilient and effective health system. It promises a solid foundation for achieving universal health coverage and improving public health outcomes across the nation. The transition from isolated, consultation-based strategies to this comprehensive, multi-stakeholder approach is a critical step in strengthening Nigeria's healthcare landscape.

By prioritizing the alignment of state-level initiatives with the federal vision, SWAp underscores the essential role of states in creating a robust and unified healthcare framework. This significant move marks a new chapter in Nigeria's health sector, setting a precedent for future healthcare strategies and reforms.

### Navigating Challenges

In navigating the challenges that sub-national governments often encounter, such as limited funding, inadequate health infrastructure, and human resource constraints, a proactive approach is crucial. By aligning state-level initiatives with Federal Government objectives, as emphasized by the Nigeria Health Sector Renewal Investment Initiative, states can mitigate some of these hurdles. Open communication and collaboration channels between state and federal authorities will be vital in addressing conflicts and fostering a shared understanding of objectives. Regular evaluation and feedback mechanisms will further enhance adaptability and the overall success of the aligned efforts. Moreover, the strategic use of partnerships with the private sector, harnessing technology in healthcare, and implementing efficient resource management are innovative solutions that can play a pivotal role in overcoming these challenges and building a more resilient healthcare system.

### A Collaborative Call to Action

The success of Nigeria's health sector renewal initiative and the achievement of universal health coverage heavily depend on the proactive engagement of state governments. It is a collective journey towards a healthier Nigeria.

- **Seize the Opportunity for Transformation:** State leaders, the time for transformative change in healthcare is now. Embrace the strategies outlined here-in, align your initiatives with federal objectives, and lead your state towards a future of robust, accessible, and resilient healthcare.
- **Pioneer Progress in Your Community:** Your leadership has the power to pioneer progress in your state. Take inspiration from successful endeavours, align with the Nigeria Health Sector Renewal Investment Initiative, and

showcase the positive impact your state can make on the broader healthcare landscape.

- **Innovate in the Face of Challenges:** Challenges are opportunities for innovation. Confront limited funding, inadequate infrastructure, and human resource constraints with innovative solutions. Forge partnerships with the private sector, leverage technology, and manage resources efficiently to overcome hurdles and enhance healthcare delivery.
- **Build Collaborative Networks:** Foster open communication and collaboration not only within your state but also with federal authorities, private sectors, and NGOs. By building strong partnerships, you can amplify the impact of your initiatives and create a more interconnected and resilient healthcare system.
- **Lead with Resilience and Vision:** Lead with resilience and a long-term vision. View challenges as opportunities for growth and progress. Your commitment to aligning state-level initiatives with federal objectives can shape a healthcare system that not only addresses current needs but also stands resilient against future uncertainties.

Your leadership is instrumental in shaping the health and well-being of your citizens. Seize the moment, embrace innovation, and guide your state toward a healthier and more prosperous future.

The road to universal health coverage and an improved health sector in Nigeria is a shared responsibility. The active participation of sub-national governments is not just beneficial but essential for the realization of our national health goals. Together, we can build a robust health system that is accessible, affordable, and adequate for all Nigerians.

# UNICEF EMPOWERS 285,000 WITH LEARNING SKILLS IN BORNO, YOBE



**T**he United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) has provided essential learning skills to 285,000 beneficiaries in Borno and Yobe states.

The initiative is thanks to funding from the Partnership for Learning for All in Nigeria project by the Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office, in collaboration with Education Cannot Wait.

The beneficiaries include 270,500 children aged 6 to 17 years, comprising 45% boys and 55% girls, along with 7,200 educators and facilitators, 1,035 government officials, and 2,235 school and center-based management committee members.

Speaking to journalist during a field mission to UNICEF-supported schools in Jere and Maiduguri metropolis to commemorate International Education Day, Mr. Ian Attfield, the Senior Education Adviser at the British High Commission, said that the four-year programme aims to enhance access to safe, inclusive, and high-quality learning, particularly focusing on children affected by conflict, especially girls and those with disabilities.

Attfield noted that the Partnership for Learning for All in Nigeria, an Education Emergency Program (PLANE-EIE), is a four-year £16 million grant initiative initiated in December 2021, expected to conclude in December 2025.

He added that it is being implemented in Borno and Yobe states, with UNICEF as the consortium lead alongside Plan International as a consortium partner.

*The programme is in its third year of implementation, contributing significantly to the education sector's recovery in conflict affected areas*

The implementation areas include Maiduguri, Jere, and Konduga local government areas in Borno State, as well as Damaturu, Nguru, and Potiskum local government areas in Yobe State.

"The programme is in its third year of implementation, contributing significantly to the education sector's recovery in conflict affected areas. This initiative underscores a comprehensive approach to addressing the educational challenges posed by conflict, specifically emphasising inclusivity and quality learning for vulnerable children," Mr Attfield said.

UNICEF Education Officer in Maiduguri, Mustapha Shehu, said that the funders visited schools to inspect their investments, adding that Plan International supported teachers' training in various ways.

Shehu explained that Plan International supported 140 schools, provided them with learning materials, and conducted training for teachers on Kanuri arithmetic and reading intervention.

"Teachers received Teaching at the Right Time training, were trained on components such as psychosocial support, safe school declaration, and operationalization.

"The schools were also equipped with wash facilities, including boreholes. The team from FCDO is here for the annual review and assessment of interests with partners to see the teaching and learning and what they have invested in Borno State," said Shehu.

# States partner FG to build additional 9,300 PHCs in 4 Years



with all Stakeholders towards achieving frontline health security and routinized basic health care services among others.

He emphasised the need for collective interventions of Federal, State and Development Partners to be more people centred and well coordinated to achieve overall sustainable goals.

**T**he State governments, in collaboration with Federal government and development partners, have unveiled plans to build additional 9,300 Primary Healthcare Centres (PHCs) over the next four years.

This initiative aimed at increasing PHCs from 8,300 to 17,600 nationwide and will be complemented with the training of 120,000 Frontline Health Workers, expected to be flagged off soon as part of the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

Coordinating minister for Health and Social Welfare, Prof Ali Pate disclosed this in his Keynote Address at the 2-day Meeting of North East Forum of Honourable Commissioners of Health in Maiduguri.

Pate, who was represented by the Executive Director of National Primary Healthcare Development Agency (NPHCDA), Dr Muyi Aina, said the three pronged strategic approach adopted by the Agency include Institutional Strengthening and effective coordination of all Primary Healthcare services, efficient, equitable, quality and trust worthy services, and strong collaboration

*These promises were not mere expression of goodwill, they represented lifelines for our people, for mothers delivering children, for victims of unimaginable violence and for entire communities struggling against diseases*

The North East like much of Nigeria, he regretted, still has unacceptably poor health indicies which calls for strong collaboration rather than fragmentation of efforts at national and Subnational levels.

The minister said "the Nigerian Health Sector Renewal Investment Programme which encapsulates our strategic vision for the sector" was geared towards cohesive common goal to save lives, reduce both physical and financial pains and produce health for all Nigerians."

In his opening remarks, the executive governor of Borno state, Prof Baba Gana Umara Zulum called on the World Health Organisation (WHO) to fulfill its promises to state as regards enhanced TB reduction and management, provision of DNA Machines for Gender Based Violence management, construction of hospitals in Biu and Munguno LGAs.

Zulum noted that "these promises were not mere expression of goodwill, they represented lifelines for our people, for mothers delivering children, for victims of unimaginable violence and for entire communities struggling against diseases".

## Yobe: \_\_\_\_\_

# Experts, UN Endorse Buni's Healthcare Service Delivery



The healthcare service delivery in Yobe state is undergoing some radical transformation with experts and the United Nations among others, giving the Mai Mala Buni administration a pat on the back as a new era unfolds in the state. **YUSUF A. YUSUF** writes

“**H**ealth is wealth” is the popular maxim. There is no doubt that the economy and development of any society or nation can only be propelled by healthy citizens. This explains why healthcare delivery in Yobe state under Governor Mai Mala Buni administration, has consistently received priority attention for a better health status for people of the state.

The governor, in his inaugural address May 2019, unveiled a healthcare development programme of establishing one functional Primary Healthcare Centre in each of the 178 political wards across the state to bring healthcare delivery to the doorsteps of the people. So far, 140 have been completed, equipped, commissioned, and put to use for the benefit of the people.

Each of the new Primary Healthcare Centre has an equipped laboratory, a labour room, a pharmacy stocked with medical consumables, male and female wards for admission of patients, and staff quarters for the accommodation of medical personnel posted to these facilities to ensure 24/7 services in the communities.

For the border communities of Bulatura, in Yusufari Local Government area, Gumsi, in Yusufari Local Government Area, Dole Machina and Taganama in Machina Local Government Area and Ma'anna, in Geidam Local Government area, it is a new dawn.

The establishment of the functional primary health centres had saved them from crossing over into Niger Republic to access healthcare services. It was a long-awaited dream come true.

And to further take healthcare delivery to the next level in the state, the Buni administration upgraded four General Hospitals to Specialists Hospitals, and eight Primary Health Centres to General Hospitals, with all the necessary equipment and facilities befitting of Specialist, and General Hospitals thereby boosting the secondary healthcare delivery and bringing healthcare services much closer to the people.

**Tackling maternal, child mortality**

Worried with the distasteful and avoidable record

of high maternal and child mortality in the state, Governor Buni constructed the ambitious 375-bed capacity Maternity and Child care health complex which is unarguably Nigeria's largest maternity and child care clinic.

The structure is made up of seven blocks of one-storey complex with patient-friendly spaces in accordance with the global best practice in modern maternal, Newborn and Paediatric health care as obtained in advanced countries. The architectural masterpiece would satisfactorily take care of expectant/nursing mothers, their newborn babies as well as children in general.

The Obstetrics and Gynaecology wing of the Complex has 64 Open cubicles, five call duty rooms, five satellite pharmacies, one side laboratory and four Nurses' stations. The Special Baby Care Unit (SCBU) has three adjoining generously spacious and nicely done wards that is 28 baby cots wards for newborn babies suspected of sepsis, 10 newborn cots wards for out-born babies, and 10 newborn baby cots wards for In-born babies, four Nurses' stations, 10-bedspace room/unit for their nursing mothers.

In addition, there is a 10-bed space room for nursing mothers to breastfeed their newborn babies, five Doctor's rest/Call duty rooms, five nurses' rest/change rooms, five offices for the unit Matron in charge, four additional offices for health information management/documentation, seminar room, a library, Kitchen and stores.

The Labour ward and obstetrics theatre units have four operation suites (including attached sterilization and scrubbing area, six recovery rooms, additional offices for anaesthetics perioperative nurses, other theatre support staff, male and female change rooms, common room for staff on duty, seminar and computer rooms.

The Paediatric medical ward has 40 cubicles, four call rooms, four side labs and a satellite Pharmacy.

Similarly, the Emergency Paediatrics Unit has 32 bed space cubicles (including a resuscitation cubicle), 2 doctor's call duty room, a side laboratory, nurses' station, change room, satellite pharmacy and eight staff offices.

#### UN commends efforts

In line with Governor Buni's policy of providing standard and functional health facilities at all levels, state-of-the-art equipment are installed at the centre to provide the necessary healthcare services to mother and child, to curb the menace of maternal and child mortality in the state.

Commissioning the complex in January 2023, former President Muhammadu Buhari, said the complex can provide maternity and child care services to all the states in the North Eastern Sub-region. This position was further corroborated by the United Nations Resident Representative in Nigeria, Mohamed Yahya, who led a high-powered delegation to the state recently.

Mohamed said: "The investment in the health sector is pretty impressive and Yobe state is back on the path of development after the devastation by the insurgency. We are quite impressed with the potential of the facilities dealing with maternal and child healthcare challenges".

To meet the manpower needs of the facilities, the state-owned College of Nursing and Midwifery Damaturu, produced about 1,200 nurses, midwives and community midwives who were given automatic employment to provide quality medical services to the people.

"There is no doubt that the reforms introduced in healthcare delivery by the Buni administration are achieving very positive results. It has ensured sustainability of providing affordable and accessible healthcare delivery to the people of Yobe state. It is obvious that the Contributory Healthcare Programme of the state is performing creditably well and has earned Yobe state the first position in securing 100 percent implementation in the Northeast sub-region," said a top health officer who spoke under anonymity.

#### The Bill and Melinda foundation

*The investment in the health sector is pretty impressive and Yobe state is back on the path of development after the devastation by the insurgency*

The State Contributory Healthcare Scheme, established four years ago, has provided effective and efficient healthcare. Impressed with the programme, the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation awarded a prize of N30 Million to Yobe state government for being the best performing state in the Northeast sub-region. The award provided YOCHMA with an opportunity to enrol civil servants and vulnerable persons into the programme to have access to effective and efficient medical services.

The state-of-the-art machines upgraded at the State-owned Teaching Hospital have continued to attract patients from neighbouring and far states on medical tourism to Yobe State as confessed by Malam Adamu, a retired Permanent Secretary in Bauchi state.

Adamus's son was referred to Egypt for surgery but was advised by his neighbour to go to Yobe State which he heeded, and had a successful surgery at a cost far less than the cost of the flight ticket from Nigeria to Egypt.

Similarly, Yobe state government has distinguished itself as next to none with an exemplary record of free dialysis treatment for kidney patients in the state. This has attracted patients from other parts of the country, enjoying the free dialysis treatment.

The government provided 80 customised tricycle ambulances to health facilities in areas with difficult terrain to convey expectant mothers and sick persons to the headrest health centres.

#### Ambulance service

Further to this, the administration returned the Yobe State Emergency Medical Ambulance Service and Yobe State Healthcare and Health-Related Facilities Inspection and Monitoring Agency. This move is to enhance service delivery in matters relating to domestic and road traffic accidents, and monitoring of healthcare facilities to provide the best standard practice.

Besides, the initiative provides the opportunity for first aid treatment to victims from the scene of accidents before reaching medical facilities while the Health Facility Inspection and Monitoring Agency empowers health authorities to ensure healthcare delivery is not compromised at any level in the state.

#### The foreign dimension

Last year, Governor Buni took the fight against kidney disease to the United Kingdom to partner with reputable Research institutes with renowned researchers, to establish the causative agents of kidney disease on the banks of River Yobe.

The governor, in a meeting with renowned epidemiologists, said the state lost many people living on the banks of River Yobe to kidney failure, and many more, now patients of the disease.

"The figure of people dying and others as patients is very worrisome and that calls for quick action to save the communities. I am equally worried that a large number of the productive population are getting more affected.

"I am optimistic that you would partner with us to find a solution to the disease to save our people and others in the neighbouring states also lined up along the banks of the river" the governor had said.

Speaking at a meeting with the governor, Neil Peace, the internationally celebrated Professor of Epidemiology at the London School of Hygiene, had said the data generated would be used to establish the causative agents which would push for finding a solution.

Also at another meeting, Ben Caplin, a Professor of Nephrology at the University College London, who specializes in population-based clinical and laboratory studies said, it is important to establish the causes of the disease.

He commended Buni for his interest in finding a solution to this problem facing the communities.

"The only solution to this problem is to find out the possible causes and mitigate the causes as a solution to the disease to save this population and indeed the future generation," Ben had said.

- Culled from Blueprint Newspaper

## HOW NIGERIA CAN STIR UP, SUSTAIN POLITICAL WILL TO END MALARIA

**Malaria continues to be a significant public health challenge in Nigeria, with millions of cases reported annually. It is an acute fever illness caused by Plasmodium parasites, which are spread to people through the bites of infected female Anopheles mosquitoes. Though it can be a cause of death, it is preventable and curable.**

Despite various efforts to combat the disease, including the distribution of insecticide-treated bed nets and the administration of antimalarial drugs, Nigeria still grapples with high morbidity and mortality rates related to malaria.

One critical factor in effectively tackling this disease is the presence of strong political will and sustained commitment from government authorities, policymakers, and stakeholders.

However, the decline in cases and fatalities falls short of meeting the benchmarks outlined in the World Health Organisation (WHO) Global Technical Strategy for Malaria 2016–2030.

This strategy serves as a technical guide for achieving the corresponding Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Alarming, the deceleration in the reduction of malaria incidence and mortality has been evident since 2015, with numerous countries worldwide reporting spikes in cases.

Notably, between 2016 and 2017, all 10 African countries, including Nigeria with the highest malaria burden experienced an increase in cases.

This trend raises significant concerns, necessitating

immediate action to realign the response efforts.

However, on Friday, Jan. 12, 2024, the World Health Organisation (WHO) certified Cape Verde as being malaria-free, hailing it as a significant milestone in the fight against the disease.

Cape Verde, an archipelago of 10 islands in the central Atlantic Ocean, faced severe epidemics in densely populated areas before it implemented targeted interventions.

“It gives us hope that with existing tools, as well as new ones including vaccines, we can dare to dream of a malaria-free world,” WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in a statement.

Worldwide, some 43 countries have been certified malaria-free by the WHO, which requires showing that the domestic chain of transmission has been broken for at least three consecutive years.

According to Severe Malaria Observatory, Statistics and Facts of Malaria in Nigeria, malaria is a pervasive health issue in the country, affecting 97 per cent of the population.

It says the predominant malaria species was Plasmodium falciparum, transmitted by Anopheles mosquitoes. In 2021, the country reported the highest global malaria cases and deaths.

It says efforts to combat malaria include the High Burden High Impact approach, the 2021–2025 National Malaria Strategic Plan, and securing \$364 million from multilateral banks. Severe malaria treatment shifted to injectable artesunate.

It also notes that malaria in pregnancy faces challenges in sulfadoxine-pyrimethamine uptake, slightly decreased insecticide-treated net ownership, as well as seasonal malaria chemoprevention in the Sahel region aimed to cover 35 million children.

It highlights the healthcare sector and efforts on malaria control, elimination and prevention.

“Healthcare tiers range from federal to local levels.

“The public health care system covers tertiary, secondary, and primary care. Nigeria receives funding from various sources for malaria control, with Seasonal malaria chemoprevention (SMC), programmes implemented in specific states.

“Populations with low access to treatment include those in North Eastern Nigeria due to insurgencies, rural communities, and nomadic populations”.

Meanwhile, the WHO regional director for Africa, Dr Moeti Moshido, commends Nigeria at the launch of the 2022 Nigeria Malaria Report in Abuja for a significant 55 per cent reduction in malaria deaths, from 2.1 to 0.9 per 1000 population.

Moshido says despite the country contributing 27 per cent of global malaria cases, progress has been made, with a 26 per cent decline in malaria incidence since 2000.

“The Report on Malaria in Nigeria 2022 is an excellent model from which to use data to prioritize health interventions.

“Using data, we can prioritize and target interventions, optimize the allocation of resources and facilitate the monitoring of performance at federal and state levels.

“This report is a result of the collaboration between the Nigeria Malaria Elimination Programme, the WHO Regional Office for Africa, and the Global Malaria Programme,” she says.

She emphasizes the importance of maintaining essential health services, particularly in populations affected by humanitarian emergencies. Environmental factors like climate change and certain practices may increase transmission.

To also show the will to eliminate malaria, efforts by the federal government to eliminate malaria are emphasized in the 2024 budget where there is an allocation of N57.392 billion without details.

This sum of money is for a new project titled “Immunization plus and malaria progress by accelerating coverage and transforming services (impact) – immunization (multilateral/bilateral project tied loan).”

Considering the huge sum of N57.392 billion, experts say a breakdown of the amount should have been provided.

“It would have been better if a little more detail were provided.

“There is a need for the country to foster a multi-sectoral approach, to build and sustain the political will to eliminate malaria within its borders,” they say.

Proffering some ways forward, Mr Odinaka Kingsley Obeta, a Biomedical Scientist and Executive Director of Block Malaria Africa, stresses the need for sustained political commitment in the country’s fight against malaria, citing Algeria’s success after over 20 years of dedication.

He also emphasizes the need for increased youth engagement in the fight against malaria considering that youths make up over 60–70 per cent of the Nigerian population.

According to him, this strategy has already been adopted in Kenya, Zambia, Eswatini, and several countries in Africa with outstanding contributions already being made by young people in these countries towards achieving zero malaria.

Obeta says some factors impede efforts at eliminating malaria of which some are the evolving challenges, including antimalarial drug resistance, fake antimalarials, and new threats such as climate change and the emergence and spread of Anopheles stephensi across

Africa.

He criticizes the country’s inconsistency in commitment, noting a decline in external funding due to insufficient domestic support.

He highlights the country’s limited involvement in the clinical trials and production process of the recently approved malaria vaccines, expressing concern about the nation’s seriousness in tackling the global burden of the disease despite being a high-burden country.

“The low funding support for the Nigeria National Malaria Elimination Programme raises questions about the government’s commitment to malaria eradication,” he says.

Prof. Oyewale Tomori, a Virologist, advocates that the country studies the successful malaria eradication strategies of countries like Cape Verde.

Tomori says there is a need for a multifaceted approach involving reliable laboratory diagnosis, street-wise diagnosis, therapeutics, mosquito control, environmental sanitation, and vaccination.

He underscores the importance of coordinated efforts from individuals and governments, stating that both play crucial roles in ending malaria.

He calls for proper education to define specific responsibilities for all stakeholders, rejecting the idea that the government alone can achieve sustained malaria eradication. Instead, he emphasizes collective responsibility to address the malaria challenge.

Prof. Olugbenga Mokuolu, a Professor of Paediatrics at the University of Ilorin and Ilorin Teaching Hospital, Kwara, also says multifaceted approaches are needed to achieve the fight to end malaria.

“Nigeria is progressing steadily, but the malaria situation varies among countries, making comparisons challenging.

“To strengthen our gains, we must enhance intervention coverage, target them effectively, and pursue malaria vaccine access.

“Insecticide resistance prompts the procurement of costlier nets, while deploying additional strategies like Indoor Residual Spray and Larva source management is crucial, especially in high-burden states,” he says.

Mokuolu, who is also the former National Malaria Technical Director, says uptake of the malaria vaccine and ensuring continuous improvement in data quality are essential measures the country could use.

Meanwhile, Dr Charles Ugwuanyi, a Consultant Neurosurgeon and NMA-FCT, emphasizes the importance of developing and executing comprehensive public awareness campaigns in the country to educate citizens on malaria’s devastating effects.

Ugwuanyi urges political leaders to publicly commit to ending malaria, allocating resources to maintain momentum and political will.

“Collaborating with civil society organizations, advocacy groups, and international partners can mobilize support and resources for malaria control.

“Establishing transparent monitoring and evaluation systems ensures accountability and effective resource utilization in the fight against malaria.

“Engaging local communities is crucial for grassroots support, sustaining political will through collective action, and advocating for improved access to prevention and treatment services.

“Supporting research and innovation in malaria control demonstrates the value of ongoing investment, providing evidence for policymakers to prioritize these efforts,” he says.

He also recommends that the government establish dedicated funds and sustainable financing mechanisms for malaria control programs to ensure continuous support and resources.

– NAN

**To strengthen our gains, we must enhance intervention coverage, target them effectively, and pursue malaria vaccine access**



## NIGERIA GETS \$14M GRANT FOR POLIO ERADICATION

**T**he Minister of Health and Social Welfare Prof Ali Pate yesterday said Rotary International's grant of \$14,037,787 to Nigeria will assist the nation to eradicate all variants of polio by 2030.

The grant was presented to the Minister in Abuja.

The grant, he noted, emanates from a comprehensive, sector-wide strategy aimed at revitalizing the nation's health sector—a direct outcome of the Compact forged between the Nigerian government and its development partners.

Pate spoke during the presentation of grants totalling to the Minister following the approval of \$14,037,787 to strengthen polio surveillance and in recognition of the strides made by the country over the years in ending the disease.

Chairman, Nigeria National Polio Plus Committee (NNPPC), Joshua Hassan speech said the Rotary Foundation Trustees, at their January 2023 meeting, approved a grant of US\$2,675,000.00 to support Polio eradication in Nigeria through WHO Nigeria for Surveillance.

Hassan, who was a past District Governor of Rotary Nigeria, while making the presentation said an additional grant of \$4,514,785 was approved in October 2023 while on the 10th of January 2024 another grant of \$ 6,848,002 was approved, totalling \$14,037,787.

He said: "These are all one-year grants, which must be fully expended between 31st March 2024 and 2025", he said while pledging further technical support for the country.

"Rotary through (NNPPC) Nigeria National Polio Plus Committee will continue to support polio eradication and routine immunization in Nigeria through National Emergency Polio Operation Center (NEOC) technical support providing accountability, training frontline polio field workers award, and recognition of



**'I want to give the assurance that we will use this resources to serve the people for whom you intended this contribution to serve and for the global agenda of improving the health security of Nigerians'**

good performance as well as community/social mobilization efforts to improve OPV acceptance and non compliance resolution", .

In his response, Pate, who expressed his delight at the grant noted that since the country has been certified polio free and the new grant would go a long way towards efforts to eliminate the poliovirus variant that has been recorded in some parts of the country..

Pate was grateful for Rotary's gesture, characterizing it as aligned with the Federal government's comprehensive sector-wide approach to revitalizing the nation's health sector while he acknowledged the organization's contributions to the ongoing efforts in disease eradication.

He also assured the donor that the grant would be put to good use and for the purpose it was meant for.

While assuring the donor that the grant would be utilized appropriately for its intended purpose, Pate said, "We will use this resources prudently and efficiently the highest level of integrity, transparency and accountability.

"I want to give the assurance that we will use this resources to serve the people for whom you intended this contribution to serve and for the global agenda of improving the health security of Nigerians".

Speaking via zoom, Walter Kazadi Mulombo, the World Health Organization (WHO) Country Representative, applauded Rotary and pledged the organization's commitment to diligently oversee the utilization of the grant.



## ABIODUN ADVOCATES MORE ACCESS TO TERTIARY EDUCATION

Ogun State Governor, Prince Dapo Abiodun, has said Nigeria needs more universities to tackle the problem of access to tertiary education in the country.

The governor also advocated an increase in the carrying capacity of existing institutions.

Abiodun said this during the official opening ceremony of the Aletheia University, Ago-Iwoye, adding that the opening of the institution represents a dream of a society where education is not just a privilege, but a right for everyone.

“Statistics show us that almost two million candidates apply for admission into our tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Out of this number, only about 800,000 are able to secure admission. This leaves a huge gap because of the limited carrying capacity of our various institutions.

“Therefore, there is an urgent need to tackle this problem of access through the approach of increasing increasing the carrying capacity of our institutions as well as establishing new ones.

“Definably, government alone can not handle this, hence, there is a need to establish more private institutions like this,” he said.

Abiodun, while noting that his administration having recognized the transformative power of education, introduced the Ogun State Education Revitalization Agenda (OGSERA), which he said has made the state the only state in the country with the Learners Identification Number (LIN).

The governor added that the LIN has enabled his administration to identify, and also follow the progress of students in the public primary and secondary schools in the state.

**There is an urgent need to tackle this problem of access through the approach of increasing increasing the carrying capacity of our institutions as well as establishing new ones**

He also said that OGSERA would help transform education in the state, ultimately fostering a more skilled, knowledgeable and empowered generation ready to contribute to the state's social economic development.

“The Ogun State Education Revitalization Agenda (OGSERA), stands as a testament to our determination to provide quality education that is accessible to all.

“We have laid this foundation and today, Ogun State is the only state in the country that has what we call Learner Identification Number (LIN), meaning that every student in Ogun State has an LIN by which they are identified. This allows us to follow them from elementary, primary, secondary education, so we know the number of students in Ogun State. This is not applicable in any other state in the country,” he said.

In his welcome address, the founder of the institution, Maj. Gen. Sansadeen Awosanya (rtd), said the school was established with a vision to be a world class institution in a unique learning environment, noting that graduands from the institution would receive both academic and entrepreneurial certificates.

Awosanya, who lamented that Nigeria's education has remain stagnant and still operating the system left behind by the colonial masters, added that Aletheia University is poised to produce graduates with innovative minds who are morally sound and equipped to become professionals and employers of labour in the future.

The Pro-Chancellor of the School and former Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, Dr. (Mrs.) Onikepo Akande, said the setting up of the university was to further pursue the founder's dedication to serve God and humanity.

He said that the curriculum would be based on producing graduates who are not job seekers but products that could compare with their peers anywhere around the world.

The Ebumawe of Ago-Iwoye, Oba Abdulrasaq Adenuga, appreciated the state government for reconstructing the Ilisan-Ago-Iwoye road which has impacted on the socio-economic development of towns in the axis.



*Gov Francis Nwifuru*

**I** will always say, that Governor Francis Ogbonna Nwifuru has a balanced sense of leadership and development. In the sense that, he steadily moves to meet the immediate needs of Ebonyi people, while building for the future of the State as well.

Like we have read in various fora, some critics are of the opinion that instead of doling out funds for empowerments and making donations to assuage the immediate needs of people, he should rather build industries and factories in the State for posterity's sake. On the other hand, many adore his humanness in finding that connect with his people, and respecting the truth that times are unfavourable, economically speaking. Truth is, he has his eyes and legs on both sides – a huge plus for Ebonyi people.

Therefore, the cliché, 'as we build skyscrapers, we must keep our people alive to experience the beautiful moments we create.' How has Governor Nwifuru done this?

A comprehensive inquisition into the Governor's calculated push of fund/cash into the State's economy since inception of office till January 2024, is mind-blowing. The most exciting of this revelation is that this cash flow does not end on ink and white paper. Testimonies have come

**Indeed, the echoes from the Peoples Charter of Needs of Governor Francis Ogbonna Nwifuru in Ebonyi State, are audible to the deaf and visible to the blind**

## HOW EBONYI'S ECONOMY WAS BOOSTED WITH OVER N9.6BN IN 7 MONTHS

to bear witnesses to the upliftment of standards of living, healthcare palpable joy and untold calm within families and Ebonyi State at large. Even the Labour Congress in the State, is at awe.

I will tell you this. Those sharpened with the creeds of economics, postulate that in Modern Economic Growth Models, increase in Government spending during harsh financial times, boosts economic activities, thereby improving the Gross Domestic Product of the society. 'When people are spending money, they are increasing aggregate demand, which increases the State's output' (Study Smarter: Modern Economic Growth). These are pointers speaking positively on the economic growth of Ebonyi State. Interestingly, same model underscores, that for economic development to happen, such as better standards of living, healthcare and education, there has to be proper economic growth. While the latter is quantitative in measure, the former offers qualitative value.

Away from talking economics, we take a look at the practical steps that Governor Francis Ogbonna Nwifuru has taken in this regard.

1. When he came on board on May 29, 2023, one of his first moves was to convince the State Executive Council to approve a monthly bonus of N10,000.00 for all workers in Ebonyi State. A cumulative summation of this proclamation on a monthly basis is about N100,000,000.00.



In 7 months, it is N700,000,000.00. This took effect from July 2023. If we add the N10,000.00 he gave to workers this January 2024, it will sum up to N800,000,000.00.

2. He then proceeded to increase subvention to Ebonyi State University by N50,000,000.00 making it N200,000,000.00 and that of Ebonyi State College of Education, Ikwo, from N50,000,000.00 to N65,000,000.00 effective from June 2023. Additionally, the Governor paid off N300,000,000.00, earlier owed by the previous Government. By 8 months in January 2024, he has pumped N520,000,000.00 into the system and summarily, N820,000,000.00, through the University system.
3. This one came as a showery wave down the spines of Ebonyi people - the approval of payment of arrears of gratuities for pensioners in Ebonyi State, from 1996 to 2021. The total payment at the end of that batch of the exercise, is N3,608,536,469.03. I can reliably inform you, that plans are underway to continue this payment from 2022 till date. More importantly, Governor Francis Nwifuru has added, that when the payment gets to date, potential retirees will get their gratuities on the date of their retirement. It will be a norm in Ebonyi State. But this is a story for another day.
4. In July 2023, the Governor approved the disbursement of a total sum of N50,000,000.00 to small scale businesses in Ebonyi State. This was done through the State Ministry of Commerce and Industry. The fund was targeted to small business owners and traders in the market.
5. Another huge roar was the empowerment of 500 Ebonyians doing menial jobs in various places, with N2,000,000.00 each. This was the first batch, which came up to the sum of N1,000,000,000.00.
6. He then approved a Christmas bonus of N100,000.00 each, to all State workers in Ebonyi. Reliably, it came up to the tune of N976,300,000.00. Recall that Local Government workers got N50,000.00 each in that regard.
7. Between the 27th Day of December 2023 and 12th day of January 2024, the Governor gave approval to the Small and Medium Scale Development Agency of the State, to disburse

the sum of N141,900,000.00 in various degrees, to Ebonyi people, as compiled by the Agency. A breakdown of this disbursement saw 502 persons paid N100,000.00 each; 139 persons paid N300,000.00 each; while 100 persons received N500,000.00 each. These disbursements were monitored and verified by World Bank, as the Agency works with them.

8. Donations and assistance to people with stringent health issues and concerns in the State has come up to N2,229,461,500.00, the latest being a donation of N10,000,000.00 to an Ebonyian who underwent leg amputation due to severe sepsis.

Like I mentioned earlier, these funds have revived the health of the economy of Ebonyi State. During the 2023 Christmas celebration, a priest confidently said, that there was drastic reduction in the number of persons who came to them for help during the season, as compared to the previous years. Some top managers of financial institutions in the State equally attested, that they have noticed healthy chunk of financial activities by Ebonyians at banks. These informal indices as well, point in favour of the matter under discussion.

Indeed, the echoes from the Peoples Charter of Needs of Governor Francis Ogbonna Nwifuru in Ebonyi State, are audible to the deaf and visible to the blind. Little wonder the Chairman of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), Prof. Ogugwa Egwu exclaimed that 'Ebonyi State have never had it so good.' To think that Ebonyi people are still scratching the surface of what Governor Francis Nwifuru has in store for them, is gracious.

One day, we will expound the effects he has had when Ebonyi State becomes industrialized, because his passion for it is untainted. He has already started by revitalizing the ones that are moribund. In addition to that, it is still a thing of huge imagination, how much this cash flow will go on to push the economy of the State in the upper trajectory. However, the prints are there already and the Governor's vision is solid. We are relishing a bubbly economy in Ebonyi State. Long may it continue.

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# NGF Engages Minister of Power in Comprehensive Energy Sector Talks

In a recent gathering between the Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF) and the Minister of Power, significant discussions unfolded which delved into the intricacies of the nation's power sector.

The primary focus was to tackle challenges and explore opportunities presented by the newly enacted Electricity Act of 2023. The meeting, marked by formal introductions, set the stage for a collaborative dialogue between the NGF and the Minister of Power.

Commencing with the Minister of Power's welcome address, he commended the Nigeria Governors Forum, NGF for orchestrating the meeting and emphasized the collaborative spirit fostered during the recently concluded Ministerial Retreat. The objective of the retreat, as highlighted, was to encourage collaboration and cooperation.

The Minister underscored the transformative impact of the new Electricity Act, which unbundles the Electricity Power Sector, allowing stakeholders at various levels, including private and public entities, to actively participate and promote financing.

Acknowledging the NGF's proactive approach, the Minister praised the creation of a dedicated Power Desk, recognizing its pivotal role in addressing sector-specific challenges. The emphasis on Distributed Power was reiterated, with a focus on the crucial role states play in the power sector value chain, especially in distribution and the potential for investment in Embedded Generation.

Providing the broader context, the Director-General of the NGF, Mr. Asishana Bayo Okauru outlined the forum's mode of operation, mandate, and areas of focus. Expressing enthusiasm about the Electricity Act, the DG discussed initiatives facilitating its implementation, including the creation of a dedicated Power Desk and an upcoming meeting with the FCT Minister.

Recognizing legacy issues and concerns faced by states, the DG highlighted the need for resolution to ensure a seamless transition to the sub-national market.

The Chairman of the Commissioners of Energy Forum expressed gratitude to the Minister and congratulated him on his appointment. Calling on the Commissioner of Energy for Benue to speak for the Forum, he requested an opportunity for all Commissioners of Energy to visit the



Minister.

The Commissioner of Energy for Benue State conveyed excitement about participating in the renewed hope agenda facilitated by the Electricity Act 2023. Emphasizing the need for coordinated state participation, the Commissioner acknowledged various interventions since the passage of the EA 2023 and stressed the importance of synergy.

The NGF advised commissioners to actively engage in discussions, recognizing their central role in implementing the new Act.

Mr. Odion Omonfoman, Lead Consultant to the NGF, introduced the Nigeria States



Electrification Masterplan (NSEMS) Program, focusing on eight critical components. The program's structure involves a steering committee with the NGF Chair as Chairman and the Minister of Power as Vice Chairman. Mr. Omonfoman highlighted the NGF's desire to collaborate with states in contributing to the National Electricity Integrated Strategy Plan.

Addressing specific concerns raised by states, such as the amendment of the Act and shareholding in Discos, Mr. Omonfoman expressed concern and recommended necessary amendments. He emphasized the importance of Rural Electrification collaboration between the REA and states, calling for an impact assessment of REA's projects.

The Commissioner of Energy for Taraba underscored the need for amendments related to hydro power generation in the Electricity Act, while the Commissioner of Energy for Lagos State emphasized the necessity for state-specific representation in the National Strategic Implementation Plan.

In response to States' concerns, the Minister stressed the documentation of proposed amendments. Encouraging active state participation in Discos, administrative unbundling, and rural electrification, the Minister outlined additional collaborative measures. States were urged to assist in reducing ATC & C losses, appeal for right of way for transmission projects, and attract generation investments, emphasizing embedded generation and solar home systems.

Regarding the Implementation Plan, development is set to commence within a year, with draft policies expected in the second half of the year. The Minister announced further discussions on his visits to states.

The Chairman of NERC provided additional insights, urging states to submit schedules of projects and expedite regulatory valuation submissions. The National Council on Privatization (NCP) was tasked with formalizing and addressing equity issues.

Expressing concern about states' suspicion and fear, NERC emphasized a smooth transition, and an order for the unbundling of existing DISCOs was proposed. Collaboration with the Senate for the amendment of the Electricity Act to review multiple levies was also highlighted.

The Director of Rural Electrification stressed the importance of studying the Rural Electrification and Strategy Implementation Plan, highlighting its guidelines for state participation. The REA's Central Data Management System, mapping proposed projects, was emphasized. On the issue of Right of Way, states were urged to abolish intermediaries and work directly with the REA.

In conclusion, the meeting exemplified a collaborative effort between the NGF and the Minister of Power, addressing challenges and paving the way for a more effective and inclusive power sector transition.

*The emphasis on Distributed Power was reiterated, with a focus on the crucial role states play in the power sector value chain, especially in distribution and the potential for investment in Embedded Generation*



## INSECURITY

# Oyo Governor Reiterates Call for State Police

**G**overnor Seyi Makinde of Oyo State has, again, called for the establishment of state police, noting that it has become imperative to surmount the insecurity challenges facing different parts of the country.

The governor, who maintained that the refusal of the Federal Government to approve South-West Governors' demand to establish state police a few years ago led to the establishment of the Western Nigeria Security Network Agency codenamed Amotekun, said it is important for the Federal Government to revisit the matter.

Makinde stated this when he received the Conference of Speakers of State Legislators, South-West Chapter, led by its chairman and Speaker of Ekiti State House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. Adeoye Aribasoye.

The speakers paid a courtesy visit to the governor in his office in Ibadan, where he appreciated them for their condolences and words of support over the January 16 explosion in Bodija, Ibadan.

The governor maintained that there is a need for collaboration and cooperation between the executive arm of government and the legislators to deliver dividends of democracy and bring development to the people.

He said, "I want to observe that you need to all come together irrespective of the political party that brought you into office. This is a demonstration that the electioneering period is over and you need to have everybody pulling together to govern and deliver dividends of democracy to our people."

While speaking on the security challenges in the country, Governor Makinde maintained that the establishment of state police is an idea whose time has come and that the fears in some quarters that states would not be able to maintain state police are unfounded.

He cited the example of Oyo State where the payment of salaries and pensions has never been an issue despite the economic challenges in the country.

Makinde said, "A lot of people may not know that before we launched Amotekun in this state, some of us governors went to the Federal Government and we asked to be allowed to set up state police for our various states but we did not get that approval during the time of President Muhammadu Buhari.

"I disagreed at that particular time and still

disagree to date that the states are not in the position to maintain state police. I have never seen where the Federal Government went to a particular state and gave the police everything they needed. So, the states are already maintaining the police."

Makinde said the police are on the exclusive list, but if that responsibility is split and states have to run their police system, they should have access to resources from the federation account to meet the responsibility of maintaining the police.

"So, the issue of being unable to maintain state police will not arise again. Give us the responsibility first and see if certain states will be able to maintain it or not.

"But since we could not get state police, we settled for Amotekun. All the state assemblies in the South West passed a common law for its establishment. So, we have to be pushing for state police, and you lawmakers have a role to play to make that a reality."

The Chairman of the Conference of Speakers of State Legislators, South-West, Rt. Hon. Aribasoye, in his remarks, described Makinde as a dynamic governor, while he also lauded his efforts in re-engineering the state through various developmental projects.

He commended the governor for his proactiveness and prompt response to the unfortunate incident at Bodija. He also expressed confidence that there would be continuous support and harmonious relationships between the legislative and the executive arms of government for better governance.

Present at the event were the Chairman, Nigeria Conference of Speakers and Speaker of the Oyo State House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. Adebo Ogundoyin; Speaker of the Ondo State House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. Olamide Adesanmi and the Speaker of the Osun State House of Assembly, Rt. Hon. Adewale Egbedun.



*I disagreed at that particular time and still disagree to date that the states are not in the position to maintain state police*

## Gov Mutfwang Enhances Plateau Security With Commissioning Of New Vehicles



In a strategic move to strengthen the security landscape in Plateau State, Governor Caleb Manasseh Mutfwang has officially commissioned 34 new vehicles designed to reinforce community vigilance.

The procurement of these vehicles resulted from collaborative efforts among the 17 Local Government Transition Implementation Committee Chairmen, aiming to facilitate the seamless deployment of security personnel across the Local Government Areas.

During the commissioning ceremony held at the Old Government House in Rayfield, Jos, Governor Mutfwang reiterated his administration's unwavering commitment to fortifying the security of lives and property, with a particular focus on rural communities within the state. The Governor underscored the paramount importance of security as the foundation for meaningful development.

"This marks the commencement of our commitment to reshape the security architecture on the Plateau. The State Government will soon introduce additional measures to support security

agencies in effectively executing their duties statewide."

Governor Mutfwang assured the citizens of Plateau State, stating, "Rest assured, we are actively working to fulfill our constitutional responsibility of safeguarding lives and property. Our determination knows no bounds, and we will continue striving to ensure the effective discharge of this duty."

Expressing gratitude to the Local Government Chairmen for pooling resources to enhance the well-being of the citizens, the Governor encouraged them to intensify their efforts in the best interest of the people.

Presenting the security vehicles to the Governor, Hon. Ephraim Usman, the Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, highlighted that the gesture aims to assist security personnel in responding promptly to security challenges within their respective Local Government Areas.



## Governors committed to ending banditry, terrorism – Governor Sani

**K**aduna State Governor Uba Sani has emphasised that state governors are willing to cooperate with the military in the war against banditry, terrorism and other violent crimes in Nigeria.

Mr Sani stated this as he laid the wreath in honour of the country's fallen heroes during the 2024 Armed Forces Remembrance Day.

The governor, who was reacting to a surge in reported cases of banditry attacks in his state and the Federal Capital Territory in the past few weeks, said the fight against banditry and terrorism had suffered setbacks in recent weeks.

However, he expressed confidence that the Nigerian Armed Forces would live up to expectations by ending banditry and terrorism in the country.

In an interview shortly after the ceremony, which was attended by the commanders and commandants of military commands and formations in Kaduna, Mr Sani said the country would never forget its heroes who died defending Nigeria's territorial integrity.

"Today's event offers us the opportunity to honour our veterans. It also allows us to reflect on the sacrifices, bravery and commitment of our fallen heroes who lost their lives in the defence of our territory's

integrity.

"We also have to appreciate our armed forces generally, the Army, Air Force and Navy as well as all other security agencies in Nigeria for their efforts to ensure peace in our country.

"Of course, the fight against banditry and terrorism in Nigeria is something that is on course.

"In recent weeks we had some setbacks, but I do not doubt in my mind because I have confidence in our armed forces and of course.

"Mr President has also made it clear that we have to come up with a time frame on when this battle against banditry and terrorism has to end.

"We are going to cooperate with the armed forces in our capacities as Governors and the Federal Government, to ensure that this war against banditry and terrorism is brought to a successful end," the governor said.

The governor also visited some wounded soldiers at the Nigerian Air Force Hospital, Kaduna and 44 Nigerian Army Reference Hospital.

During the visits, he donated medical equipment and other items like wheelchairs, blankets and other medical supplies to the hospitals.

## KANO GOVT TO ESTABLISH SECURITY TRUST FUND FOR FAMILIES OF FALLEN HEROES

**K**ano state governor, Abba Yusuf says the government will establish Security Trust Fund to support security agencies to perform their functions optimally in the state.

Yusuf stated this at the 2024 Armed Forces Remembrance Day celebration in Kano.

He said that his administration would be inviting eminent personalities in the state to support the government in the establishment of the fund.

According to him, the fund will also be used in keeping the state safe and providing the teeming youth with jobs that would take them away from all forms of social vices.

"We are determined to ensure that Kano remains peaceful and safe, and my administration will leave no stone unturned to actualise this noble dream," he said.

On the families of the fallen heroes, the governor said his administration would continue to give priority to their welfare.

He further stated that families of the fallen heroes would also benefit from the palliatives that would be distributed to the people of the state.

"During the distribution of palliative in the state, I have instructed the committee to extend the gesture to the families of the fallen heroes," he said.

The governor said that his administration would continue to work with security agencies in protecting the lives and property of residents of the state.

"Anything the security agencies require to do their jobs, we are ready to come in and support them to perform optimally," he said.

The Emir of Kano, Aminu Ado-Bayero and some other dignitaries witnessed the wreath-laying at the Fallen Heroes Centre, located at Zaria road in Kano.

The armed forces remembrance day is celebrated globally to recognise and appreciate the sacrifices made by members of the armed forces to ensure peace and unity.

In Nigeria, Jan. 15 is set aside annually to honour the fallen heroes who laid down their lives in service to humanity during the First and Second World Wars, Nigerian civil war, peace missions and various internal security operations.

The event is also used to honour the war veterans who are still alive and as a medium of soliciting financial, moral and material support for the families of the fallen heroes.



## Northern Governors propose '4D' approach to tackling region's insecurity

The Chairman of the Northern States Governors' Forum (NSGF) and Governor of Gombe state, Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya CON, has put forth a fresh strategy in addressing the ongoing challenge of insecurity in the region tagged "4D" as part of a renewed commitment to seeking a lasting solution to the persistent problem.

Governor Inuwa Yahaya announced the proposed approach at the opening of a Roundtable on Insecurity, themed "Multi-dimensional Approach to Tackling Insecurity in Northern Nigeria" organized by the Coalition of Northern Nigeria at the Nigerian Army Resource Centre in Abuja.

According to the NSGF Chairman, the "4D", represents a comprehensive and multi-dimensional framework focusing on four key pillars: promoting development; enhancing defence mechanisms; promoting open dialogue; and encouraging diplomatic efforts.

He explained that the intention was to create a well-rounded and holistic strategy to address the complex security challenges to ensure a more effective and enduring response to the challenges beyond the traditional measures especially the rising cases of kidnap-for-ransom, rural banditry, communal and religious-related crisis and farmer-harder clash among others.

"In order to develop a multi-dimensional approach to tackling our security challenges, I'm advocating the 4D approach: Development, Defence, Dialogue and Diplomacy. On development, today, Northern Nigeria ranks lowest across all indices of human development. This provides a fertile ground for terrorism and all forms of insecurity. To address this, we must put all hands on deck to address the root causes of under-development in northern Nigeria. These include poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, population explosion and environmental degradation. We must invest in infrastructure, human capital, agriculture, renewable energy, digital economy and the restoration of our environment", he said.

"On defence, we need to invest heavily in security. We must strengthen the capabilities of our security agencies to adequately respond to emerging security threats. This requires investment in

manpower, training and capacity building, equipment and logistics, enhanced intelligence capabilities, legal reforms, improved welfare, and sustained local collaboration. Also, dialogue is necessary. We must seek to foster a culture of trust and accountability. We must deny divisive elements and conflict merchants the opportunity to divide us. As the late Sir Ahmadu Bello eloquently expressed, we are a "People of many different races, tribes and religion who are knit together to common history, common interest and common ideas, the things that unite us are us are stronger than the things that divide us." We must therefore work with civil society groups, religious leaders, traditional rulers, and all relevant stakeholders in order to foster dialogue and understanding among our diverse communities", he added. Governor Inuwa further remarked that "as leaders, we must all take responsibility and join hands to reverse this ugly trend. We must recognize the urgency of the situation and make strong commitment towards the safety and wellbeing of our people. It is a challenge that affects us all. It acknowledges neither tribe nor religion. No one (rich or poor, high or low, young or old) is immune from its consequences. And as a forum, we will continue to strongly commit to the safety and stability of our region"

The Governor also expressed his dissatisfaction on how the issue of drug abuse is being handled in the Northern region, noting that drug abuse poses serious security threat as it plays a great role in fuelling insecurity in the region while urging leaders in the region to give the menace the desired attention it deserves to tackle it.

"The issue of drug abuse, and its role in fuelling insecurity, is one that is not receiving the desired attention. It is a major threat to both the present and the future of our youth. We must combat this menace and take our youth off the streets, lest they become a ticking time-bomb of socioeconomic discontents, with severe consequences on social stability and internal cohesion", he said. In their separate remarks, the Vice President of Nigeria, Sen. Kashim Shettima (represented), Ministers of Defence, Sen. Badaru Abubakar and Muhammad Bello Matawalle, all pledged federal government continued commitment to ensuring the safety and stability of Nigeria, reassuring that President Tinubu's administration is prioritising the security of Nigeria and its citizens across all parts of the country.

*In order to develop a multi-dimensional approach to tackling our security challenges, I'm advocating the 4D approach: Development, Defence, Dialogue and Diplomacy*



## STATE GOVERNORS' BOLD MEASURES TO CURB INSECURITY

Significantly hobbled by a central-command constitutional architecture, unprecedented insecurity ravages the subnational space, pegging back meaningful governance but state governors are boldly speaking out and acting up on the way forward. **LOUIS ACHI** writes

**W**hen the state is overrun by kidnapers, ritualists, bandits and terrorists, the foundational structures of growth will begin to collapse. School-age children will not be able to attend school.

Farmers cannot go to farms amidst escalating hunger and food inflation. Peoples' movement within the states will be restricted out of fear and people in business cannot honour engagements. In the circumstances, poverty will quadruple and it is only a matter of time before the economy completely crumbles.

Worse, folks would then be forced to resort to self-help and anarchy ensues. It is against this backdrop that new innovative approaches being evolved by state governors can be best appreciated.

At the tail end of January, a besieged Zamfara State seized the insecurity bull by the horns and launched its own security outfit. A determined Governor Dauda Lawal firmly stepped up his administration's war on insecurity in that bloodied subnational jurisdiction by formally unveiling the 2,645-strong Community Protection Guards (CPG or Askarawa Zamfara), designed to complement the efforts of the regular security forces.

Significantly, the ceremony at the Trade Fair complex in Gusau, the state capital, attracted the six other governors from the embattled North-West region of Jigawa, Kebbi, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina and Sokoto.

The government is utilising a multi-faceted and multi-dimensional approach to addressing security challenges

in the state, the governor's spokesperson Sulaiman Bala Idris noted. "Last year, Governor Dauda Lawal approved the engagement of 5,200 guards across the 14 Local Government Areas. Today (January 31), 2,645 Community Protection Guards graduated in the first batch," Bala added.

According to Governor Dauda Lawal at the graduation ceremony of CPG, "My administration embarked on the arduous task with a commitment to gradual reforms across all sectors of state's economy, to instil sanity and accelerate development.

"While we make these efforts, the lofty goals we set out to achieve will remain a mirage as long as the formidable challenge of insecurity remains unaddressed. This informed our decision to, among other things, establish the Community Protection Guards, known as Askarawa Zamfara.

"The steering committee for establishing the Community Protection Guards traversed the 14 Local Government Areas and screened eligible volunteers for enrolment into the outfit. We believe that the bulk of the challenges we face as a state and region are borne out of severe neglect in advancing public policy to serve the socio-economic expectations of our people.

"Today, therefore, the first batch of the Community Protection Guards, 2,645, are graduating. These young, energetic and vibrant personnel have undergone rigorous training, extensive drilling, and an understanding of the rules of engagement, amongst other skills.



*As leaders, we must all take responsibility and join hands to reverse this ugly trend.*

"These will assist them in the due discharge of their responsibility of partnering, assisting and working with the security agencies to defend our communities."

The Katsina State Governor, Dr. Dikko Radda, chairman of the North-West Governors' Forum, NWGF, who attended the event firmly re-affirmed NWGF's decision not to engage in negotiations with bandits. According to Radda, "we have gathered here today with a common purpose: to unite against banditry and insecurity in the North-West."

In his remarks at the event, chairman of the occasion, a former National Security Adviser, Gen. Aliyu Muhammad Gusau (rtd), praised the state government for establishing the CPG.

Today, every state in Nigeria is under the siege of terrorism, banditry, kidnapping-for-ransom, and ritual killings. Openly, states and state institutions are under attack from non-state actors.

Sadly, the 'chief security officer' moniker daintily hung on the necks of the nation's governors has clearly gone stale and there is a mounting perception that it needs to be fundamentally reconceptualised. The unparalleled, multifarious insecurity is driving extreme uncertainty in both the political environment and vital economic arenas.

Zamfara State's bold action captures the new wind of determined pushback sweeping the subnational space in the face of overwhelming existential threat fed by insecurity. Fed up with the hurdles imposed by the operational constitutional security architecture negatively impacting governance at the state levels, governors are speaking out and acting up.

The Zamfara State governor's action may have helped in no small way to moderate the uncharitable perception of many governors as being lazy crybabies in grappling with security situations bedeviling their jurisdictions.

As state governors ramp up bold responses to widespread insecurity, the Chairman of the Northern States Governors' Forum (NSGF) who's also the Governor of Gombe State, Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya CON, recently put forward a fresh strategy in addressing the ongoing challenge of insecurity in the region tagged "4D" as part of a renewed commitment to seeking a lasting solution to the persistent problem.

According to the NSGF Chairman, the "4D", represents a comprehensive and multi-dimensional framework focusing on four key pillars: promoting development; enhancing defence mechanisms; promoting open dialogue; and encouraging diplomatic efforts.

Governor Inuwa Yahaya announced the proposed approach at the opening of a Roundtable on Insecurity, themed "Multi-dimensional Approach to Tackling Insecurity in Northern Nigeria" organized by the Coalition of Northern Nigeria which held recently at the Nigerian Army Resource Center in Abuja.

The governor explained that the intention was to create a well-rounded and holistic strategy to address the complex security challenges to ensure a more effective and enduring

response to the challenges beyond the traditional measures especially the rising cases of kidnap-for-ransom, rural banditry, communal and religious-related crisis and farmer-harder clash among others.

His words: "In order to develop a multi-dimensional approach to tackling our security challenges, I'm advocating the 4D approach: Development, Defence, Dialogue and Diplomacy. On development, today, Northern Nigeria ranks lowest across all indices of human development.

"This provides a fertile ground for terrorism and all forms of insecurity. To address this, we

must put all hands on deck to address the root causes of under-development in northern Nigeria. These include poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, population explosion and environmental degradation. We must invest in infrastructure, human capital, agriculture, renewable energy, digital economy and the restoration of our environment.

"On defence, we need to invest heavily in security. We must strengthen the capabilities of our security agencies to adequately respond to emerging security threats. This requires investment in manpower, training and capacity building, equipment and logistics, enhanced intelligence capabilities, legal reforms, improved welfare, and sustained local collaboration. Also, dialogue is necessary.

Governor Inuwa further remarked that "as leaders, we must all take responsibility and join hands to reverse this ugly trend. We must recognize the urgency of the situation and make strong commitment towards the safety and wellbeing of our people.

"It is a challenge that affects us all. It acknowledges neither tribe nor religion. No one (rich or poor, high or low, young or old) is immune from its consequences. And as a forum, we will continue to strongly commit to the safety and stability of our region."

To expand the reach and scope of his security outreach, Governor Inuwa Yahaya who has consistently harped on the need for a unified approach leveraging both federal and state resources to enhance security infrastructure and operations also recently visited the Ministry of Defence headquarters in Abuja where he met with the Minister of Defence, Alhaji Muhammadu Badaru Abubakar, and the Minister of State for Defence, Mohammed Bello Matawalle.

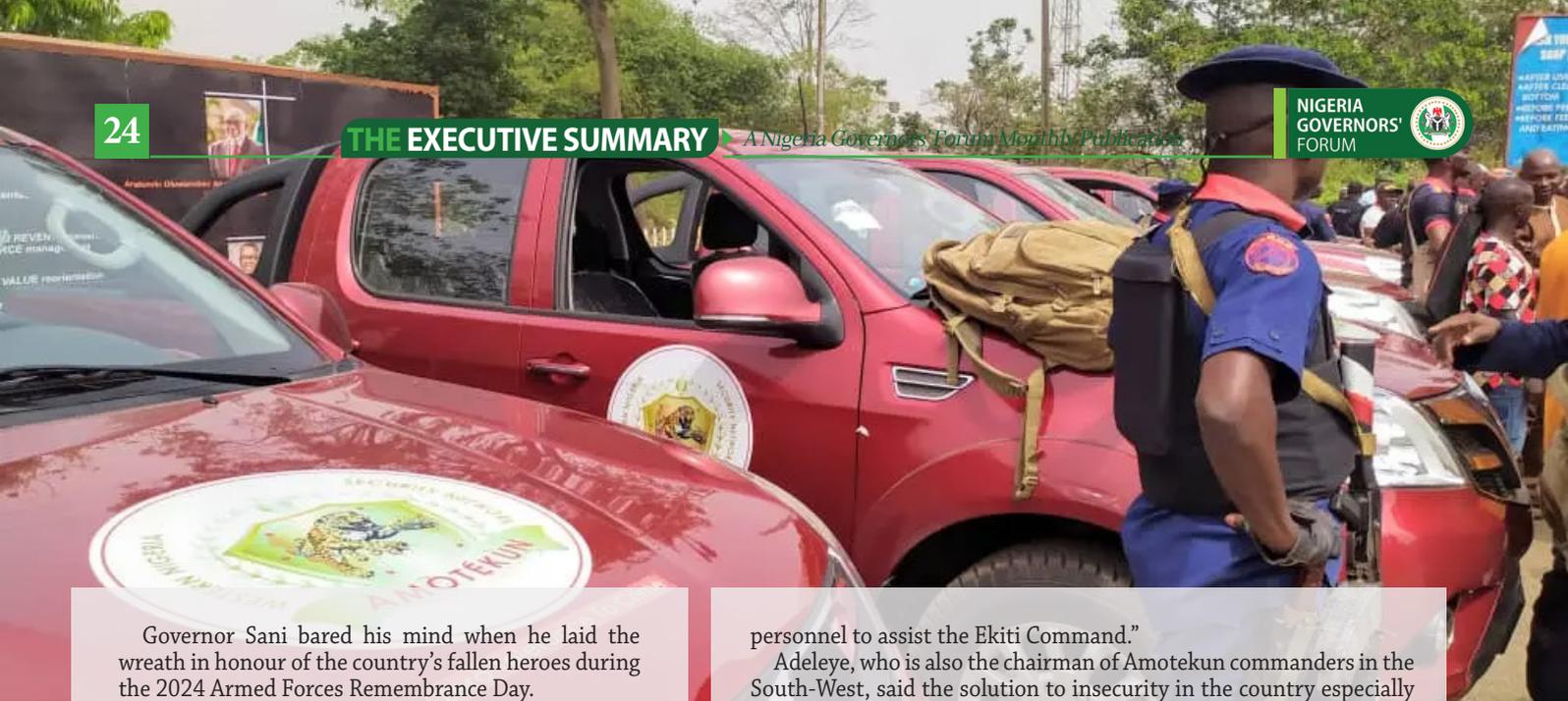
The trio, who met behind closed doors, discussed matters of national importance, especially on strengthening synergy between the federal and state governments to reinforce security measures, particularly in the Northern region and across Nigeria.

Not to permit the grass grow under his feet, Katsina State Governor Dikko Umar Radda, also recently charged residents of his state to remain strong in defending themselves against bandits attacking their communities.

He gave the charge at the commissioning of three Islamiyya schools constructed by a philanthropist, Alhaji Abubakar Dardisu at Yammama in Malumfashi and Mani Local Government Areas of the state.

The governor however promised that his administration would offer the needed support to the communities to safeguard and lead them in the right direction.

On his part, with eyes locked on combating banditry and terrorism, Kaduna State Governor Uba Sani recently stressed that state governors are willing to cooperate with the military in the war against banditry, terrorism and other violent crimes in Nigeria.



Governor Sani bared his mind when he laid the wreath in honour of the country's fallen heroes during the 2024 Armed Forces Remembrance Day.

Governor Sani obviously reacting to a surge in reported cases of banditry attacks in his state and the Federal Capital Territory in the past few weeks, said the fight against banditry and terrorism had suffered setbacks in recent weeks.

However, he expressed confidence that the Nigerian Armed Forces would live up to expectations by ending banditry and terrorism in the country.

Meanwhile, Governor, Abba Yusuf of Kano State recently declared that his government will establish Security Trust Fund to support security agencies to perform their functions optimally in the state.

According to him, the fund will also be used in keeping the state safe and providing the teeming youth with jobs that would take them away from all forms of social vices.

"We are determined to ensure that Kano remains peaceful and safe, and my administration will leave no stone unturned to actualise this noble dream," he said.

"Anything the security agencies require to do their jobs, we are ready to come in and support them to perform optimally," he said.

Yusuf stated this at the 2024 Armed Forces Remembrance Day celebration in Kano.

It could be recalled that the 2023 Christmas Eve massacre in Plateau State with unidentified gunmen overrunning about 23 local communities in Bokkos and Barkin Ladi local government areas, leaving a death toll that authorities estimated to be over 200 with more than 10,000 displaced exposed the grave vulnerability of the Nigerian state and put her operational security architecture on the spot.

This bloodletting was immediately followed by a series of successful kidnap cases in Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory. This January 2024 alone, cases of kidnappings escalated, raising concern among citizens and residents.

Meanwhile, in Ondo State, to secure release of the six recently kidnapped schoolchildren, three teachers and their driver, the state security outfit, codenamed, Amotekun, deployed 100 of its personnel to Ekiti State.

According to Ondo State Amotekun Commander, Chief Adetunji Adeleye, "Governor Lucky Aiyedatiwa has ordered that we deploy Amotekun personnel to work with their counterparts in Ekiti to secure the release of the pupils and arrest killers of the monarchs.

"Some days ago, we had an unfortunate incident in Ekiti and the governor of Ondo State directed us to move in the interest of brotherliness to assist in the security situation in Ekiti State. We deployed 100

personnel to assist the Ekiti Command."

Adeleye, who is also the chairman of Amotekun commanders in the South-West, said the solution to insecurity in the country especially in the South-West is the establishment of state police.

In another development, the National Security Adviser, NSA, Mallam Nuhu Ribadu, recently commended the effort of the Governor Peter Mbah's administration at restoring normalcy in Enugu State, saying the administration has fought insecurity to a standstill in the state.

Governor Mbah reiterated the commitment of his administration in waging a remorseless war on corruption and insecurity, saying it was critical to the effort to grow Enugu's economy from a \$4.4 billion to \$30 billion economy and eradicate poverty.

Both spoke at the official commissioning of the EFCC Enugu Zonal Command Complex. Ribadu who was the Special Guest of Honour, reiterated the federal government's commitment to the war against insecurity and corruption across the country.

In another major development, the Governor of Bauchi State and chairman of another governors' forum block, Bala Mohammed, expressed full support for the creation of State Police, saying it will address the current security challenges confronting the country.

He said this recently when he led his colleagues in the forum on a visit to Gov. Caleb Mutfwang of Plateau at the Government House in Jos.

Mohammed, who decried the rising security challenges across the country, said that state police would complement the efforts of the conventional security agencies.

State police will provide opportunity for governors to handle the security situation in their respective states with ease, he proclaimed.

His words: "The ratio of police to the citizens is very low and the governors know the peculiarity of their states and how to tackle this challenge. So, we have been advocating for this.

"There is need for the decentralisation of the security apparatus so that we can deliver good governance by having state police. Again, it will give us the opportunity to engage the structure of the security agencies, training our youths and making sure the rules of engagement are not abused and there is no extrajudicial killings.

"We will work in tandem with the established best global practice than being forced to be using vigilante and even at that we are working with the security agencies, but we are still being accused of pursuing our interest.

"We can see what is happening in Zamfara and the Amotekun in the South-West where citizens are sleeping with their eyes closed."

Against the backdrop of extreme insecurity haunting the nation and stunting socio-economic development, many believe it's really about time to constitutionally unchain the governors to change the narrative.

Cut to the bone, the principal claim of the governors is that they are handicapped by the 1999 Constitution that ties security to the federal government. This is a fundamental issue and cannot further be glossed over.

*The ratio of police to the citizens is very low and the governors know the peculiarity of their states and how to tackle this challenge*

# 2024 NATIONAL BUDGET: Weighing the Agricultural Sector



By Prof Abba Gambo



*However, the year 2024 holds plenty of promise for the agricultural sector, as luckily the subsistence farmers will still be eking out a living on their small farm hectares with archaic and rudimentary tools*

The realignment of the national budget to January every year was a historic move by former President Muhammadu Buhari. The present regime of His Excellency, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, has equally towed the same line.

The 2024 National Budget was presented to the National Assembly, early December.

The total amount budgeted for 2024 is N27.50trillion, out of which the South-West got N4.20trillion, South-South got N3.43trillion, North-West got N2.50trillion, South East N2.29trillion, North-Central N1.89trillion and the North-East N1.60trillion.

The agricultural sector was allocated N362.94 billion out of the N27.50trillion. With a national emergency on food security, and the change of nomenclature of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development to Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, there was great joy and highly positive optimism that the lingering food insecurity will be a thing of the past.

The Malabo Declaration of which Nigeria is a signatory clearly stated that “All nations must commit 10% of their annual budget to the agricultural sector in order to boost food security”.

The figure allocated to the nation's agricultural sector in the 2024 National Budget is far less than the commitment of the Malabo Declaration.

Similarly, with an all-time high food inflation rate at 31.5%, according to the NBS, and the lingering security challenges in the core food basket states, the hope to end food insecurity in Nigeria

has been dimmed.

The previous challenges of poor extension services delivery, lack of high yielding qualitative hybrid seeds, high cost of fertilizers, lack of functional tractors and other agricultural equipment in most states, the never ending farmers/pastoralists crisis, high post-harvest losses, lack of infrastructure for effective storage, marketing and transportation, and of course, kidnapping, maiming and killing of farmers on their farms are all very much around.

Navigating through such a myriad of perennial crises will be a very daunting task to the brand new Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security.

However, the year 2024 holds plenty of promise for the agricultural sector, as luckily the subsistence farmers will still be eking out a living on their small farm hectares with archaic and rudimentary tools.

The promise of the federal government in revamping the River Basin Development Authorities for dry season irrigation farming will certainly increase the total tonnage of food per year, if properly implemented and executed.

Cut to the bone, the imperative of prioritising agricultural production is not merely feel-good wish but a fundamental necessity for civilised survival.

# Significance of *Banana* IN THE ECONOMY

Banana is a tropical fruit that comes from the flowering plant genus *Musa*. It belongs to the family Musaceae. The fruit is typically elongated and curved, and it varies in colour from green, when unripe, to yellow or red, when ripe. Bananas are one of the most widely consumed fruits globally and are known for their sweet taste and convenient, portable nature. Banana plants are large, herbaceous plants that are often mistaken for trees due to their structure. The plant produces clusters of bananas, called hands, which consist of individual bananas, or fingers. The fruit is botanically classified as a berry. Bananas are not only valued for their taste but also for their nutritional content. They are a good source of potassium, vitamin C, vitamin B6, dietary fiber, and other essential nutrients. Additionally, bananas are versatile in culinary applications, being consumed fresh or used in various dishes, desserts, and beverages. The leaves of the banana plant are also utilized in some cultures for culinary and traditional purposes. The banana plant is a significant crop in tropical and subtropical regions, and different varieties of bananas are cultivated worldwide. In examining the economic significance of the Banana (*Musa* spp.), **PROFESSOR ABBA GAMBO** highlights its multifaceted impact on global agriculture and society.

**B**anana cultivation serves as a pivotal source of employment for millions globally, contributing to various sectors from farming and processing to transportation. Particularly vital for smallholder farmers, bananas play a crucial role in poverty reduction and improving livelihoods.

Globally traded, with major exporting countries like Ecuador, the Philippines, and Costa Rica, bananas constitute a significant component of the international agricultural economy. As a staple crop, their affordability and accessibility make them crucial for dietary diversity in many regions.

Beyond consumption, banana cultivation promotes sustainable farming practices, offering an alternative to monoculture and diversifying agricultural landscapes. The versatile fruit is not only consumed fresh but also processed into various products, creating additional economic opportunities.

According to the FAO/UN, 2023, banana plants extend beyond the food sector, with applications in industries such as pharmaceuticals and cosmetics. Additionally, they contribute to soil fertility, conservation, and agroforestry systems, showcasing positive environmental impacts.

The banana industry involves a complex value chain, creating numerous business opportunities and contributing to economic development. Ongoing research in banana genetics and disease resistance enhances crop yield and overall agricultural practices, ensuring long-term sustainability.

Bananas, rich in essential nutrients, address global nutrition security. Biomedical research explores their potential use for edible vaccines, offering innovative approaches to immunization.

Banana waste finds various uses, from organic fertilizers



to animal feed and biogas production, contributing to waste reduction and creating economic opportunities.

Banana cultivation provides a platform for education and training in sustainable agricultural practices, contributing to rural community development.

Despite challenges like Panama disease and Black Sigatoka, ongoing research aims to develop disease-resistant banana varieties, crucial for long-term viability.

The diverse uses of bananas create opportunities for social entrepreneurship, fair trade practices, and sustainable agriculture, empowering local communities.

The banana industry's adaptability to changing trends, such as organic and specialty varieties, contributes to market competitiveness. Banana plants contribute to carbon sequestration, aligning with global efforts to mitigate climate change.

Advancements in supply chain management, including blockchain technologies, enhance traceability and transparency in the banana industry.

Research in genetic improvement has led to hybrid banana varieties, contributing to sustainability and productivity. Efficient water management in banana cultivation aligns with broader environmental goals.

Collaborations between governments, private enterprises, and non-profit organizations can address challenges in the banana sector.

Smart farming technologies optimize banana cultivation practices, improving resource efficiency and reducing environmental impact.

Bananas contribute to culinary tourism, attracting tourists with activities like banana

**Banana plants contribute to carbon sequestration, aligning with global efforts to mitigate climate change**

tastings and cooking classes.

The global nature of the banana industry facilitates cultural exchanges and international collaboration, leading to advancements in farming practices.

Community development initiatives supported by the banana industry contribute to education, healthcare, and infrastructure in producing regions.

Efforts to reduce the carbon footprint of banana production involve sustainable farming practices and energy-efficient processing.

Implementing circular economy principles in the banana industry minimizes waste, fosters innovation, and promotes sustainable business practices.

**Nutritional Importance:** The medium-sized banana (approximately 118 grams) contains the following nutritional content:

Calories: 105  
Potassium: 422mg  
Vitamin C: 10.3mg  
Vitamin B6: 0.4mg  
Dietary fibre: 3.1g  
Sugars: 14.4g  
Protein: 1.3g  
Fat: 0.3g

Please note that these values may vary slightly based on the size of the banana.

**Benefits of banana leaf Banana leaves offer various benefits without the need for bullet points:**

**Eco-friendly Packaging:** Biodegradable banana leaves can replace conventional plastic or styrofoam packaging, reducing environmental impact.

**Culinary Use:** Widely used in some cuisines for wrapping and cooking food, banana leaves add a subtle flavour and aroma to dishes while keeping them moist.

**Medicinal Properties:** In traditional medicine, banana leaves are believed to have anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties, sometimes used for medicinal wraps and poultices.

**Plates and Serving Dishes:** In certain cultures, banana leaves serve as natural, disposable plates or trays, reducing the need for disposable tableware.

**Fertilizer:** Decomposed banana leaves can be used as organic fertilizer, enriching the soil with nutrients. **Crafts and Decorations:** Banana leaves are utilized for various crafts and decorations due to their large size, vibrant green colour, and flexibility.



# Gov Radda Mourns Passing of Sen Bukar Ibrahim

**G**overnor Dikko Umaru Radda of Katsina State has conveyed his heartfelt condolences to the government and people of Yobe State following the demise of Sen. Bukar Abba Ibrahim, a former two-term Governor of Yobe State.

Sen. Abba Ibrahim passed away in Saudi Arabia, with reports indicating that he breathed his last at a Saudi-German Hospital in Makkah recently.

The late statesman governed Yobe from January 1992 to November 1993 during the Third Republic. He was re-elected and sworn in on May 29, 1999, serving two terms under the All-Nigeria People's Party (ANPP).

Expressing his sorrow over the ex-governor's death, Governor Dikko Radda described Sen. Abba Ibrahim as a patriotic elder statesman who was genuinely committed to national service.

In his statement,



Sen Bukar Ibrahim

1950 -2024

Governor Radda hailed the late leader as a distinguished figure whose contributions significantly impacted the socio-economic growth of Yobe and the human capital development of its people.

"Indeed, the leadership qualities of Sen. Abba Ibrahim are unmatched. He led a life of true impact, wholly devoted to advancing the cause of his people and other Nigerians dwelling in Yobe state. May Allah (S.W.T) grant him Jannatul Firdaus. Ameen," Governor Radda remarked.

Governor Radda extended his condolences to Governor Mai Mala Buni of Yobe State and the entire Yobe populace during this somber period. The unexpected and painful loss of Sen. Abba Ibrahim is deeply felt, and the people and government of Katsina State share in their grief.

The statement was released by Ibrahim Kaula Mihammed, Chief Press Secretary to Governor Dikko Umaru Radda.

## YOBE SEEKS WORLD BANK SUPPORT ON IRRIGATION

**Y**obe State governor, Mai Mala Buni has urged the World Bank to minimise administrative bottlenecks in its support to the recovery programmes of the state in resettling communities devastated by the insurgency.

He made the appeal when he received a World Bank delegation who paid him a working visit, saying the administrative bottlenecks had slowed down some projects and programmes.

"The longer it takes to channel the support, the more it is badly affected by inflation because if you plan to execute a particular project or programme and you cost it on an existing rate, if it is not done in time, it will certainly be affected by inflation on prices of raw materials for the project," he said.

Governor Buni called on the World Bank for partnership on irrigation under the Multi-Sectoral Crisis Response Programme.

"Agriculture remains the mainstay of our people and it provides them



with sustainable means of livelihood, food supply and security.

"We are encouraging irrigation agriculture because of the unpredictable nature of rain-fed agriculture owing to climate change. We always have flooding, drought or desert encroachment hence the need to encourage irrigation.

"We shall appreciate a great deal of partnership with you to boost irrigation farming taking advantage of our land bank, improved security where our people now have access to their farms, unhindered. The government is committed to making irrigation farming attractive, and profitable in Yobe State," Buni said.

Leader of the delegation, Mrs Madhu Raghunath, commended the governor for providing the required leadership in making the recovery process very efficient and effective.

"We would like to share the Yobe State experience with some states to hasten the resettlement, recovery and resettlement of their displaced communities.

"We have always enjoyed working with you and will continue to partner you to effectively improve the resettlement of the displaced communities," she stated, adding that the World Bank was focusing on a world free of poverty in a livable planet.

## Borno gov commissions 500 houses for displaced persons

**B**orno State Governor, Babagana Umara Zulum has recently commissioned 500 resettlement houses for internally displaced persons in the Logumani community of Ngala local government area of Borno State.

The newly constructed Logumani community is made up of units of two-bedroom semi-detached low-cost houses, with basic amenities such as a primary school, health center, police station, and borehole for water provision.

According to the governor, the



initiative was part of the state government's efforts to provide shelter for people displaced by the Boko Haram conflict.

To support the displaced persons to rebuild their lives, the governor also donated cash and other supplies to the beneficiaries.

Each male and female head of household received N50,000 in cash.

The beneficiaries also received one

bull and one cow, a bag of rice and maize grain, a water pump, clothing materials, seedlings, and insecticide to boost irrigation farming.

Also, female beneficiaries who are housewives received N20,000 in cash and a wrapper each.

The governor who lauded the German government, the UK government, and the UNDP for supporting the state government's initiative assured that the government of Borno State will not relent in providing necessities to its people.

He equally lauded the federal government for its commitment to addressing the security challenges faced in Borno State.

Logumani residents were displaced as a result of the activities of Boko Haram insurgents. They were previously taking refuge in Dikwa, Ngala, and other communities

# Abdulrahman Abdulrazaq:

## STILL A TRAILBLAZER @ 64

By Louis Achi

**A**nother year around the sun is always something to celebrate. And when an outstanding personality, a star, completes this existential course, there is even more reason to revel. Incidentally, a servant-leader who cares little for mundane revelry achieved this milestone recently.

He is His Excellency, AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq, Governor of Kwara State and Chairman of Nigeria Governors' Forum, NGEF, who turned 64, on February 5. He is defined by his sheer controlled kinetic energy and significantly revels in pushing new frontiers. These ingrained traits remain the central portrayal of H.E. Governor AbdulRazaq.

It's no secret that today, Kwara State and Nigeria, stand on the brink of substantial disruptions - and of considerable opportunity - as new governance models challenge traditional narratives. But then only tested trailblazers and pathfinders with vision, knowledge and courage can provide the critical leadership to ensure both stability and progression. And this is H.E. Governor AbdulRazaq's forte.

He has shown a relentless pursuit for genuine human development and growth, but has done so in a measured and calculated manner. What his administration has done in Kwara State so far, is nothing short of remarkable. He has also considerably demonstrated he is a personality and leader not swayed by extraneous emotionalism and parochial cant.

It is then little surprise that His Excellency, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, was the first to congratulate H.E. Governor Abdulrahman Abdulrazaq, on his birthday.

H.E. President Tinubu celebrated the thorough-bred professional and Spartan politician whose historic tenure has brought sweeping changes to the development discourse and trajectory of the state.

The President specifically applauded the governor for the programmes, projects, and initiatives his administration has introduced



to address the significant needs of the people of Kwara, noting especially the KwaraLEARN initiative which seeks to empower teachers and re-engineer education for the future prosperity of the teeming youths of the state.

President Tinubu also commended the governor for his discipline, attunement and candour, which have bolstered his popularity among the people and broadened the acceptability of progressivism in the state and wished the governor more prosperous years as well as good health and strength in the service of the people.

The position of being a state's chief executive, carry considerable weight, especially in charting the course of bold, progressive engagement with the critical elements in the democratic mix. His choice, simply acknowledges the capacity of focused individuals to change their society for the better.

Today, at a vigorous 64 years of age, H.E. Governor AbdulRazaq, is no less a child of providence. He wields power and influence with alluring humility and exemplary focus. With his life's trajectory thus far, he has demonstrated that faith, business, philanthropy, administration and politics fundamentally address transformation of the human condition for good.

He still unabashedly maintains this unique philosophy and footing. Little wonder, the famous American poet and essayist Maya Angelou observed that, "Nothing can dim the light that shines from within."

H.E. AbdulRahman was born in Zaria, Kaduna State, into the family of the first lawyer from the country's Northern Region, AGF Abdulrazaq, a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), who holds the prominent traditional titles of Mutawalli Ilorin and Tafida of Zazzau (Zaria). He hails from Ilorin West Local Government, in the Kwara Central Senatorial District of the State.

He attended Capital School, Kaduna, between 1966 and 1968; Bishop Smith Memorial School Ilorin between 1970 and 1971; and Government College Kaduna where he earned his West African Senior School Certificate Examination in 1976 (WASSCE).

Prior to his foray into politics, Governor AbdulRahman's innate entrepreneurial spirit drove him to make history at the age of 29 when he founded NOPA Oil Services, the first indigenous company to trade in crude oil and petroleum products to the global markets (US, EU and Asia).

He also imported crude oil and petroleum products into Nigeria. Significantly, his success story inspired other young entrepreneurs who

**He has shown a relentless pursuit for genuine human development and growth, but has done so in a measured and calculated manner**

have also become accomplished oil and gas magnates.

His exertions were not limited to his immense knowledge of the petroleum industry. His managerial skills and business acumen traversed agriculture, construction, information technology, shipping and real estate. He is a consultant to various multinational oil companies and some countries.

He is also acclaimed for his silent philanthropic activities some of which include educational scholarships for indigenes and provision of potable water for disadvantaged communities in Kwara State.

Hundreds of women and youths have also benefited from his empowerment programmes, vocational training, provision of start-up capital for small scale businesses and provision of tools, post vocational training. He is also a renowned supporter of people living with disabilities

He was elected Governor of Kwara State at the 2019 governorship election held on March 9 2019 and sworn in on May 2019. He was reelected in 2023. On May 24, 2023, he emerged Chairman of NGF, succeeding the former Governor of Sokoto State, Rt. Hon. Aminu Tambuwal, with H.E. Seyi Makinde, Governor of Oyo State, emerging Deputy Chairman.

It's worth noting that he is also passionate about giving opportunities to the young people, which possibly explains the preponderance of people below and in their 40s in his cabinet. It has been said that Governor AbdulRahman has the youngest and most gender-friendly cabinet in the country.

He is happily married to the love of his life, Ambassador Olufolake AbdulRazaq, a union blessed with lovely children.

Happy birthday trailblazer.



## Governor Inuwa Parleys Investors, Champions Gombe's Potential At Nigeria-India Business Forum

**G**ombe State Governor, Muhammadu Inuwa Yahaya, CON, earlier today, participated in an international business forum organised by the Nigeria-India Business Council (NIBC) in collaboration with the Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines, and Agriculture (NACCIMA).

The event, themed "Expanding trade and investment opportunities between Nigeria and India," provided a platform for investors to connect with potential partners, government agencies, regulatory bodies, and others to enhance their presence in the Nigeria-India business landscape.

Governor Inuwa utilized the opportunity to network with prospective investors, highlighting the huge market potential of Gombe State and its status as the best in Ease of Doing Business in Nigeria for two consecutive times.

Gombe is an agrarian state with arable land and abundant natural resources, including gypsum, limestone, coal, oil and gas among others.

The state also boasts of a 1000-hectare Industrial Park located within the vicinity of the 40MW Dadinkowa Hydropower plant which stands as a hub of economic growth and development.

The Gombe Governor also engaged in talks with entrepreneurs during the forum, urging investors seeking growth and success to explore Gombe's business-friendly environment facilitated by his administration.

During the event, Gombe State was repeatedly acknowledged by the compere and some

*Gombe is an agrarian state with arable land and abundant natural resources, including gypsum, limestone, coal, oil and gas among others*



speakers as a shining example with warm and friendly people as well as conducive atmosphere for businesses to thrive.

It should be noted that Gombe State will later in the year host the second edition of its Investment Summit, tagged GoInvest 2.0 which aims to consolidate on gains of the previous one and attract new investment leads, market Gombe as a top investment location, and facilitate interactions between potential investors and the state with Ready to Offer Investment Projects, Premium Land, Public Private Partnership (PPP) Projects, and other opportunities open to investors, financiers, investment facilitation agents, and companies.

The Nigeria-India Business Forum was attended by governors, ministers, and high profile investors from both Nigeria and India.

## Katsina To Spend N74.5bn On Construction Of 9 New Roads

**T**he Katsina State government has allocated N74.5 billion for the construction of nine new roads within the state capital.

This decision was part of the resolutions reached at the state executive council meeting held at

the Government House in Katsina State, presid-ed over by Governor Umar Dikko Radda.

Addressing journalists shortly after the meeting, the Commissioner of Works, Housing, and Transport, Engr Sani Magaji Ingawa, stated that the drive aims to enhance urban infrastructure, improving business activities across the city.

He added that the projects, under the governor's urban renewal programme, were awarded to the Chinese company CCECC, with an anticipated completion timeline of two years.

A press statement signed by the governor's chief press secretary, Ibra-

him Muhammed Kaula, states that "among the nine roads earmarked for development include: the construction of the eastern bypass, stretching from Dutsinma Road, Kano Road, passing through Daura Road, and terminating at Yandaki Village in Kaita Local Government.

"Dualisation of roads from Katsina Central Mosque through Kofar Marusa, terminating at WTC Roundabout, and another from Yandaki-Shinkafi to Kofar Sauri, and Airport Junction to the proposed bypass along Daura Road.

## OYO TOPS NIGERIA'S DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT



Gov. Makinde

**N**ational Council on Communication, Innovation and Digital Economy (NCCIDE) has declared Oyo State as this year's overall winner in digital technology development in Nigeria.

This followed a peer review exercise which was announced at the opening ceremony of the 11th meeting of the NCCIDE recently hosted by Kano State government.

The state was declared the best state in e-governance implementation, infrastructural development in digital economy as well as human capital development.

The five-day event reviewed status reports and stock taking on the approvals and

directives given by Council at the last meeting held at Ibadan.

In her address, the director overseeing the Office of the Permanent Secretary in the Federal Ministry of Communications, Innovation and Digital Economy, Barr Margaret Ene Ebute, said NCCIDE is a forum where all states' commissioners of ICT and digital economy in Nigeria meet annually to discuss the progress, challenges and emerging trends in the sector and ensure that necessary advice is given for the overall development of the sector and the country in general.

The event with the theme, "Leveraging Digital Technology and Innovation to Drive Nigeria's Economic Growth and Development" will also review how digital technology will improve Nigeria's economy.

"In Nigeria, communications and digital economy has continued to play a major role in developing the Nigerian economy and I have no doubt that this meeting will consolidate on its role and provide the necessary pathway to

policies that will deepen and sustain the achievements recorded so far in the sector," she stated.

Declaring the event open, the Kano State commissioner for science, technology and innovation, Mohammed Tajo Othman, expressed the importance of leveraging the digital landscape to achieve sustainable development, economic growth and improved living standards for Nigerians.

"The outcomes of this meeting will not only influence policies and strategies but will also impact the lives of millions of Nigerians who rely on these sectors for their livelihoods and well-being," he said.

He thanked the Kano State governor Abba Kabir Yusuf for his unwavering support in hosting the event, while appreciating the minister of communications, innovations and digital economy, Dr Bosun Tijani and his team for their collaboration and dedication in making the event possible.

## Ekiti To Deploy Software For Project Monitoring, Performance

**E**kiti State government has approved the procurement of a soft-ware based platform to help project officers and executives manage their project monitoring and performance tracking activities.

This was part of the efforts geared towards ensuring that government projects are well executed, delivered on time and ultimately be of value to the targeted beneficiaries.

The state's commissioner for information, Hon. Taiwo Olatunbosun, who disclosed this in Ado Ekiti, said the Strategic Project Monitoring System (SPMS), a.k.a. "DASHBOARD" is expected to boost collaboration between project team members and the executives by providing Governments with a point of truth for project information.

Olatunbosun said, "The DASHBOARD comes with an internal use soft-ware that digitises project files and pictures to be accessible easily and securely online which would assist in actualizing Ekiti Performance, Assessment, Improvement Report (EKPAIR) goals and objectives that could be used in tracking activities of the MDAs.

He continued, "Experiences and feedback obtained revealed that tracking of activities using an automated software-based system is essential to help fast-track the monitoring of activities/programmes of MDAs which would ultimately lead to more efficient

and effective in-service delivery to the state".

The director-general/special adviser, Office of Transformation and Service Delivery (OTSD), Dr. John Ekundayo, in his remarks, listed other benefits of the software as proper execution and timely delivery of projects to the residents while project files and pictures would be digitalised to make them secure and easily accessible online thus allowing prompt access to project information for executive decision making with the governor easy access anywhere without the usual cumbersome consultation.

## e-Governance Advancements: Governor Yusuf Drives Digitization Act, ICT Policy In Kano

In alignment with the global shift towards digitization for enhanced accountability and transparency in governance, the Kano State Government is poised to enact a digitization act, facilitating the full implementation of e-governance and formulating a comprehensive ICT policy across the state. These measures aim to streamline government operations and harness the state's potential in the digital economy.

Governor Abba Kabir Yusuf disclosed this during the conclusion of the 11th

meeting of the National Council on Communications, Innovation, and Digital Economy (NCCID), held at Coronation Hall, Government House, Kano. According to a statement by the Governor's Spokesperson, Sanusi Bature, these initiatives are designed to ensure precision, efficiency, and transparency in public financial management, utilizing financial tools and software to ensure judicious fund utilization.

Governor Yusuf highlighted achievements since assuming office, including the reopening of the previously closed Informatics Institute, digitization of salary payments, development of an IGR payment platform to curb leakages, and the strengthening and digitization of operations at the Kano Geographic Information System (KANGIS).

Alhaji Abba Kabir Yusuf also requested the transfer of the NCC's digital industrial park to Kano State for effective utilization. He reiterated his administration's commitment to pursuing initiatives that will propel Kano State to higher levels of socio-economic development and prosperity.

Earlier, Dr. Bosun Tijjani, the Minister of Communications, Innovation, and Digital Economy, explained that the meeting was organized in line with President Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda, recognizing the power of technology



Gov. Yusuf

and innovation as catalysts for economic growth and development. Dr. Tijjani emphasized the importance of a strategic blueprint encompassing knowledge, policy, infrastructure, innovation, entrepreneurship & capital (IEC)/ trade to accelerate the diversification of the Nigerian economy.

The minister stressed the collective responsibility to harness the transformative power of innovation and technology to accelerate development and position the country at the forefront of the global digital discourse.



Gov. Kefas

Taraba state government, with support from the World Bank has inaugurated a livestock productivity resilience project for 41,000 households to enhance their livelihoods.

The State Project Coordinator, Mr Hananiah Albert, said this at the inauguration of the project in

## Taraba Flags Off Livestock Support For 41,000 Households

Jalingo.

Abert said that the development was to enhance livestock productivity, and improve the economic wellbeing of families to help them address the issue of gender-based violence.

"The cardinal objective of this project involves training members of the project implementation unit in preventing gender-based violence.

"This is important giving the psychological impact of gender-based violence on victims which hampers productivity in various livelihood aspects, including livestock production.

"We seek to challenge the societal stereotypes that are a disadvantage to certain genders, such as cultural norms, preventing women from

owning properties like lands, farms or engaging in animal rearing.

"Given the fact that farming and livestock production form the backbone of rural livelihoods in the state, the project has also planned to include entrepreneurial skills that will boost beneficiaries' income," he said.

Mrs Maryam Adamu, a Gender Mainstreaming Specialist, said that the project's approach was not only aimed at enhancing livestock productivity.

According to her, the project will also address social challenges that were an impediment to the full potential of rural communities to better their lots.

# Gender Issues

NIGERIA  
GOVERNORS  
SPOUSES FORUM



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A REMARKABLE JOURNEY OF IMPACT:

**MEET HAJIYA ASMA'U  
INUWA YAHAYA**

## NGSF CHAIRPERSON RECEIVES UNICEF DELEGATION

The First Lady of Kwara state, founder Ajike People Support Centre and Chair person Nigeria Governors Spouses Forum. Her Excellency, Ambassador Professor Olufolake Abdulrazaq hosted UNICEF delegation Mr. Ibrahim Sesay, Chief of UNICEF's child protection unit.

The chairlady, Mrs. Abdulrazaq, discussed with the delegation on plans to implement the partnership



compact unanimously signed by NGSF and UNICEF during the NGSF annual conference held last year, December 2023 to tackle child registration, gender - based violence and harmful practices in Nigeria. The meeting also extensively

discussed the three key components of the compact outlining implementation strategies and work plans.

This collaboration is poised to significantly address the identified social issues and anomalies.

## WIFE OF NIGER STATE GOVERNOR CALLS FOR PROTECTION OF TRADITIONAL NORMS, CULTURE



Her Excellency, Hajia Fatima Mohammed Bago made this call at the 2nd international conference on rape and child sexual abuse, organized by The oral story at the women Multipurpose centre at Minna, Niger state.

The wife of the governor in her keynote speech, acknowledged the positive impact of technology and the challenges inherent as it affects the society. She then made a call on stakeholders , most especially those in Northern Nigeria to rise up and protect the younger generation from the misuse of technology and social media by creating awareness, educating and empowering them to protect themselves and others from sexual exploitation on the cyber space.

Hajia Fatima also reiterated that the cultural and ethical values in the northern region remains the moral compass that distinguishes us in our conduct and social engagements. She called for collaborations in all strata, to create safer environments for our children and wards.

She concluded by expressing her appreciation to the convener of the Peak story, Mr. Chinemi Bamaiyi for the invitation and for initiating this crucial conversation on Rape and Child sexual abuse.



## Akwa Ibom First Lady To Support Families Of Multiple Birth Children With Monthly Stipends

**B**eneficiaries of the Empowerment Program for Mothers of Multiple Birth Children across the three senatorial districts of Akwa Ibom state are to receive stipends of fifty thousand Naira each for twins and One hundred thousand for triplets from the wife of the Akwa Ibom state Governor.

Speaking at the Empowerment Program for mothers of Multiple birth children at the Ikot Ekpene Local Government Hall, the Governor's wife Pastor Patience Umo Eno explained that the provision of monthly stipends to families is to ameliorate the

*You have seen the goodness and kindness of God and It is worth celebrating and that is why you and I are here*

burden of caring for multiple birth children.

While congratulating the mothers of the multiple birth children, the first lady urged them to take good care of their babies whom she described as a blessing from God, pledging her continuous support to families in the state.

In her words, "You have seen the goodness and kindness of God and It is worth celebrating and that is why you and I are here. I love twins and that is why I put everything I can into this. I want you to appreciate this love further by loving these children"

These children will bring you good and they will do you good. They will bring you blessings. With these children, your fame will spread abroad. People will come to respect you because of these babies you are carrying", she said.

Highlight of the event was the sharing of baby packs and cash to beneficiaries by the Wife of the Governor and other female stakeholders at the event as well as the distribution of wrappers to the women who showed up for the ceremony.

Some of the beneficiaries who spoke at the event were excited over their selection for participation in the Governor's Wife Empowerment Program for Multiple Birth Children in Ikot Ekpene Senatorial District, describing the act as a relief to them. They prayed God to replenish her and reward her labour of Love.



A REMARKABLE JOURNEY OF IMPACT:

## MEET HAJIYA ASMA'U INUWA YAHAYA

**H**ajiya Asma'u Inuwa Yahaya (Sarauniyar Gandun Akko), a quinquagenarian, was born to the esteemed and renowned family of late Dr. Yahaya Hamza in Zaria, Kaduna State, Dr. Asma'u Inuwa Yahaya, transversed the length and breadth of the north central and north eastern Nigeria for her academic pursuit.

She obtained her primary and secondary school certificates in Kaduna and Katsina states in 1984 and 1990 from Capital School and Federal Government Girls College Bakori respectively.

Hajiya Asma'u Yahaya holds a Bachelor Degree in Computer Science (B.Tech) from the prestigious Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Bauchi (ATBU), Technical Teachers Certificate (TTC) from the federal college of education (Tech) Gombe in 2003 and a Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) from the National Teachers Institute, Kaduna in 2017.

An I.T Specialist, Asma'u Yahaya worked with the inter-

cellular Nigeria Plc, Abuja from 2002-2013 as the Executive Officer (Billing Customer Unit Account), Maintenance and Administration of Billing Database, Daily Monitoring of IVR system as well as writing of SQL.

With her vast knowledge in network operations and the passion to impact on others especially her immediate community, Hajiya Asma'u Inuwa Yahaya thought computer science education and geography at An-Noor Academy, Abuja from 2015-2018 and made immeasurable impact among her students.

No doubt, since becoming the First Lady in 2019 and the number one adviser to her husband Governor Muhammad Inuwa Yahaya, Hajiya Asma'u Inuwa Yahaya has become an advocate of Girl-Child education, thereby executing numerous educational and humanitarian programs that have direct impact on the lives of women, youths and children in Gombe State. This true patriot always sees the pains of women and children as a pain for all.

Hajiya Asma'u Inuwa Yahaya, a mother, an icon, and

No doubt, since becoming the First Lady in 2019 and the number one adviser to her husband Governor Muhammad Inuwa Yahaya, Hajiya Asma'u Inuwa Yahaya has become an advocate of Girl-Child education, thereby executing numerous educational and humanitarian programs that have direct impact on the lives of women, youths and children in Gombe State

a role model, holds several traditional titles, including Sarauniyar Gandun Akko, Zinariyar Tongo, Azurfar Dukku, Kilishin Dasa, Gimbiyan Bogo, Tauraruwar Damba Barde, and Sarauniyar Matan Pindiga.

Her efforts have not gone unnoticed, as evidenced by the accolades she has received. In 2021, she was conferred with a Doctor of Science (Dr. Sc. Honoris Causa) in child development science by the International Human Rights Education Federation. The Magnificent First Lady of the Year award for supporting and empowering women (W.I.S.E 2020) and a recognition for her commitment to ending Gender-Based Violence in Nigeria (NGWA - GBV) in 2020 further attest to her impact. The year 2019 saw her honored with a Presidential award as an outstanding digital innovator, and she holds the distinguished title of Fellow of Nigeria Computer Society (FNCS).

Driven by a lifelong dream to uplift the less fortunate, Hajiya Asma'u founded the Jewel Care Foundation in 2020, realizing her mission of service to humanity through education, empowerment, and creativity.

The Jewel Care Foundation, with its motto "Making a Difference," aims to advocate for women and children's rights, achieve inclusive and equitable quality education, promote moral values among the youth, and support females, orphans, disabled, and displaced persons. In collaboration with local and international organizations, government departments, institutions, and hospitals, the foundation has executed numerous developmental projects.

The foundation's impact is palpable through initiatives like free medical outreach, distribution of hygiene packs, general medical checkups, eye treatments, cataract surgeries, and complementary food for malnourished children. Community-centric projects, such as the construction of a primary school and staff quarters, and empowerment programs for women and youth across Gombe State, have contributed to the foundation's success.

The At-Risk Children Project, launched in collaboration with Gombe State and the Federal Government, targets 150,000 children from poor and vulnerable homes, emphasizing education and livelihood. As a testament to her benevolence, Hajiya Asma'u has consistently provided food, non-food items, and medical facilities to the less privileged and orphanages in Gombe State.

These endeavors align with the government's policies, reflecting her commitment to improving the lives of those in need.

In every facet of her life, Hajiya Dr. Asma'u Inuwa Yahaya exemplifies compassion, leadership, and a relentless dedication to making a positive impact on the lives of the people of Gombe State. Her story is not just a biography but a testament to the transformative power of empathy and determination.



## NGSF, UNICEF PARTNERS TO END FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION IN NIGERIA

**T**he First Lady of Kwara state and chairperson of Nigeria Governors Spouses Forum led other first ladies in a virtual meeting with UNICEF aimed at addressing the scourge of female genital mutilation in Nigeria.

The highlight of the webinar was the presentation of the theme to commemorate the 2024 United Nations International Day of Zero Tolerance for female genital mutilation. In attendance were first ladies across the 36 states of Nigeria.

Ambassador Abdulrazaq in her address highlighted the commitment of the NSGF to addressing the key components of Female Genital Mutilation, Early Marriage, sexual and gender-based violence as well as birth registration which underscores the collective dedication towards ensuring

the well-being and protection of women and children in their respective states.

Speaking further, the chairperson commended UNICEF for their unwavering support and guidance in achieving zero tolerance on Female Genital Mutilation as we approach the remaining seven years in the decade of action.

The UNICEF team led by Ms. Cristian in her presentation rolled out six areas of partnership compact which include the following;

- Strengthening the enforcement of existing legislative and policy frameworks as well as additional interventions such as sensitization and locally appropriate accountability mechanism;

- Advocating for scale-up in providing services in all states birth registration, prevention, and service delivery to address GBV and harmful practices;

- Mobilizing local communities, and traditional and religious leaders to address negative social norms and foster movement building around the elimination of FGM, child marriage, and gender equality;

- Strengthening partnership and capacity of women and girls to exercise their rights and mobilize as social change actors;

- Invest in and use data and evidence to inform policy, programming and advocacy;

- Advocating and mobilizing both public and private financial resources to address GBV and harmful practices.



## EBONYI: MRS. NWIFURU LAUNCHES FREE CERVICAL CANCER SCREENING INITIATIVE FOR WOMEN

**M**rs. Mary-Maudline Nwifuru, the Wife of the Governor of Ebonyi State, has initiated a free Cervical Cancer Screening program benefiting 1,000 women within the state.

The launch took place during the inauguration of the Cervical Cancer Awareness Programme at Elinwovu General Hospital in Abakaliki Local Government Area (LGA).

Aligned with the objectives of the Nwifuru pet project, Better Health for Rural Women, Children, and Internally Displaced (BERWO) Foundation, the program was organized in collaboration with the Medical Women Association (MWA) and the Alex Ekwueme Federal University Teaching Hospital, Abakaliki (AE-FUTHA).

The theme for the 2024 Cervical Cancer Awareness Month is "Ending Cervical Cancer within a few Generations, with the Goal of raising Cervical Cancer and Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) Vaccination Awareness," with a focus on saving the lives of women.

Mrs. Nwifuru emphasized the prevalence of cervical cancer among women and underscored the importance of education, early detection, and proactive health measures in combating the disease.

She called upon medical practitioners, stakeholders, and traditional rulers to commit more to educating, advocating, and supporting women's health for preventive measures.

In her remarks, Mrs. Lilian Nwobashi, President of the Medical Women Association, highlighted that the program aimed to raise awareness about the dangers of cervical cancer, a leading cause of death in women.

The screening would initially target 200 to 300 women, with a collaborative effort from all partners involved.

Mr. Moses Ekuma, the Ebonyi Commissioner for Health, and Mr. Sunday Nwogba, Chairman of Abakaliki LGA, acknowledged the global prevalence of cervical cancer and urged women to take advantage of the opportunity for screening.

Mrs. Nkechi Echiegu, the Team Leader of BERWO, expressed concern over the increasing cases of cervical cancer and emphasized the need for proactive intervention.

She mentioned that Mrs. Nwifuru's office and MWA had joined forces to screen women for cervical cancer, providing health talks on general cancer issues along with other related health concerns.

The initiative targeted women from all 13 LGAs of the state within the reproductive age range of 25 to 65 years.

## KEBBI GOVERNOR'S WIFE LAUNCHES EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM IN DOLEKAINA, DANDI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

**H**ajiya Zainab Nasare Nasir Idris Kauran Gwandu has yet demonstrated an unwavering commitment to uplifting the lives of women in Kebbi state. In a recent empowerment ceremony which took place in Dolekaina, Dandi local government area. Her Excellency distributed valuable materials to many women in Dolekaina to enable them embark on some profitable ventures, thus, promoting self-reliance.

Hajiya Zainab's benevolence gesture aligned with the Kebbi state government aspirations under the stewardship of His Excellency Dr Nasir Idris Kauran Gwandu to improve the welfare of the people in the state, this initiative aims to enhance the economic status of Kebbi state people.

Furthermore, Her Excellency Hajiya Zainab pledges to extend this empowerment program across the entire local governments of the state, fostering economic empowerment at every corner. While cautioning the beneficiaries against selling the materials, she lauds the community's timely support for APC and Kebbi state government. She also urged the community members to maintain their unalloyed support for All Progressive Congress (APC)

Moreover, she promises further support for skill acquisition centers, an initiative that reinforces her dedication to fostering self-employment. This commendable effort reflects the essence of community development, showcasing a collaborative vision for a prosperous Kebbi state.



By Ahmed S. Halimah

For the principled, brilliant ‘rebel’ with a cause, it was something of a long goodbye. His last duty deployment in a compelling life journey was that of Special Adviser on Public Relations and Strategy to Governor Babagana Zulum of Borno State Babagana Zulum.

Before then, Mallam Isa Umar Gusau, the former Daily Trust journalist served in the same capacity to the then governor of Borno State, Senator Kashim Shettima, now Vice President, for eight eventful years. But he took his last breath on January 12, about eight thousand kilometres away, on a sick bed in an Indian hospital.

“Isa Gusau will be remembered for his passion for serving the people of Borno State and his dedication to the betterment of the state. His exceptional communication skills played a crucial role in fostering understanding and cooperation between the government and the people.”

Just like the Vice President and Governor Zulum both expressed their pains which flowed from their close acquaintance with Isa who worked closely with both, the late media adviser’s close partnership with the media team of the Nigeria Governors Forum, NGF, Secretariat was also deep.

So, it is indeed with profound sadness that we, NGF Secretariat Media TEAM, extend our heartfelt condolences to the family and friends on the passing away of our dear colleague, Malam Isa Umaru Gusau, the distinguished spokesperson of His Excellency, Governor Babagana Umara Zulum, the Governor of Borno State. The news of his departure has left a void that our tears fail to fill.

Isa Gusau was not merely a spokesperson but a beacon of integrity and dedication in his role. His contributions to the NGF’s monthly newsletter, “The Executive Summary,” were always welcomed as his professional verve had always effortlessly enriched our pages.

His firm commitment to his responsibilities and the community at large was both inspiring and impactful. His legacy of service will undoubtedly be remembered by all who had the privilege of working alongside him.

During this time of sorrow, may his family and friends find solace in the memories of the remarkable individual he was and the positive influence he had on the lives of those around him.

Late Isa Gusau had obtained a Master’s Degree in Media and Public Relations with the highest classification of Distinction at the University of Leicester in the United Kingdom.

He had in 2020 requested one-year study leave to move to the UK for studies, from where he remotely oversaw the governor’s media activities.

Gusau had previously obtained a Bachelor’s Degree with the highest classification of First-Class in Media, Public Relations and Advertising from Middlesex University in London. He held another Masters’ Degree and a Postgraduate Diploma in Labour and Public Relations from the University of Maiduguri.

He also held OND and HND in Mass Communication from the Kaduna Polytechnic where he had hit 4.35 out of 5.0 in his final semester examinations.

We extend our condolences to the deceased’s family, friends, and colleagues. May we find strength in each other as you navigate this difficult period. His was indeed a life of service.

– *Hajia Halimah Salihu Ahmed*  
is the Ag. Director, Media  
and Public Affairs, NGF  
Secretariat

*Isa Umar*  
**GUSAU**  
A LIFE OF SERVICE

TRIBUTE TO A

# Quintessential » Statesman @64



His Excellency  
**MALLAM ABDULRAHMAN ABDULRAZAQ (CON)**  
*Executive Governor, Kwara State and Chairman,  
Nigeria Governors Forum*

**A**s you celebrate another remarkable year on earth it brings to heart how your tenacity, transparency and patriotism as well as selfless service to humanity and contribution to National development has impacted positively on everyone that crossed your path.

Your leadership has over the years informed new thought patterns, inspire belief, drive innovations, discountenance divisiveness and reformed retrogressive ideologies.

Worthy of note too is the courage employed in your Excellency's effort to repositioning Kwara State to become an economic hub where industries, businesses and creativity thrive.

Under your leadership Kwara State has witnessed tremendous transformation, your unwavering commitment to infrastructural development has led to the construction and rehabilitation of several hundreds of projects including roads and public facilities in all sectors, fostering improved connectivity, expanded trade opportunities and enhanced economic growth.

Your Excellency's positive disposition to the development and inclusion of women in the processes of governance led to the signing into law of the Kwara State 35% gender inclusion bill, support for women political aspiration and the appointment of women and youths into the State Executive Council. These feats earned you the alias 'the He for She Governor'.

At home, Rahman is a darling of every member of the family. He pays attention to every detail that affects each member of the household despite his professional and political schedules, Governor Abdulrahman always creates time to attend to each member of his family.

On this occasion of your birthday anniversary I wish you the very best and many more years in the service of our dear State the Nation and humanity at large.

*Happy Birthday*

**Signed:**

**H E Ambassador Prof Olufolake Abdulrazaq**  
*First Lady of Kwara State, Founder Ajike People Support  
Center and Chairperson Nigeria Governors Spouses Forum.*

