

2022 Floods: NDDC To Partner NEMA, Others to Reach Victims

Flood: Ndiomu Suspends PAP Engagements Within N/Delta

Nigerian Women Demand Immediate Measures Against Flood

...As Assembly Tells COP 27 To Seek End To Theft of African Resources



Director of Womin African Alliance watches as one of the delegates makes demands

By Constance Meju

Niger Delta women have called on the federal government to put in place immediate measures to address the flooding which has consistently ravaged the country with crippling impacts on both livelihood and infrastructure in the region.

Presenting the Niger Delta demand at the recent African Women Assembly tagged, 'African Women Unite on the Frontline of Climate Crisis', Dr. Patience Osaro-Ejiji stated that Niger Delta women are tired of facing unending disaster emanating from flooding which

fall-out, forces them into a cycle of poverty.

The women called on the federal government to end the pains faced by internally displaced persons who suffer the danger of losing their lives, properties and livelihood each year, by tidying up its engagement with Cameroon, completing an age-long dam designed to mellow the impact of the Lagdo Dam that has destroyed so much in the country and dredge the Rivers Niger and Benue to create room for absorbing more water volume.

They condemned the long neglect of mitigation measures by the federal government which is responsible for the

devastating impact of the flood this year and called for support for the flood victims.

The 2022 flood has claimed almost 700 lives, submerged most of the Niger Delta and destroyed key infrastructure in the region..

They also called for an end to gas flaring and stoppage of extraction on new fossil fuel sites as well as thorough and speedy clean-up of oil polluted sites in the country.

Their demands also received support from women from 11 other natural resource countries including, Mali, Niger, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon, Senegal, Mozambique, South Africa, Sierra Leone, Cote D'Ivoire,

Burkina Faso and Liberia who were part of the Assembly and had visited oil polluted and flood sites.

The African Women Assembly sent a strong message to the ongoing Climate Change Assembly, COP 27 holding in Egypt, to "Stop Thieving Africa's

Resources".

The gathering of over 150 women representing community women and activists held October 17-20 at Igwuruta, Port Harcourt, Rivers State and was organized by Womin African Alliance and Kebebkache Women Development Resource Center.

Ogoni 9 Hanging: 4 Widows Drop Case Against Shell



Ken Saro-Wiwa

By Ibibia DonPedro

27 years after the trial and hanging of their husbands on November 10, 1995, under the military regime of General Sani Abacha, four

widows out of the wives of the 9 executed men, have discontinued the pursuit of their case against multinational oil company, Shell. The women had initiated a suit in 2017 which sought to

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Church Elder Sentenced To Life In Prison For Killing Wife Of 18 Months

Ogoni 9 Hanging: 4 Widows Drop Case ...

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affirm the complicity in the events surrounding the trial, which led to the hanging of their husbands.

The executed men include writer, dramatist and minority rights activist Ken Saro-Wiwa. The other men who were Ogoni rights activists on the platform of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People MOSOP, were Saturday Dobe, Nordu Eawo, Daniel Gbooko, Paul Levera, Felix Nuate, Baribor Bera, Barinem Kiobel, and John Kpuinen. They had been arrested and tried following the May 1994 mob attack and killing of four Ogoni leaders who were holding a meeting perceived to be pro government, at Giokoo in Gokana, Rivers State. The four men killed were, Chief Albert Badey, Edward Kobani and two brothers, Sam and Theophilus Orage.

The widows, Esther Kiobel, Victoria Bera, Blessing Eawo and Charity Levula had, gone to a court at the Hague, the Netherlands to pursue their campaign to see Shell compelled to accept complicity in the events that led to the trial and eventual execution of their husbands.

On Monday, November 7, 2022, at a session of the trial, the women indicated their wish to discontinue with the case, a move their lawyer Channa Samkalden described as 'disappointing'.



Victoria Bera



Esther Kiobel

Samkalden added that, "This has been a lengthy and demanding procedure, which makes them re-live horrible events, while the outcome is most uncertain. Rather than focussing on the appeal, initiatives are now being developed aimed at providing these women with some basic financial assistance.

In March, 2022, the effort of the widows suffered a setback, as the court at the Hague determined that there was not sufficient evidence to support the widows assertion about Shell's complicity.

The Hague court ruled that there was not enough evidence to support the widows' assertion that Shell had bribed witnesses to give false testimony in the trial that led to the execution of their husbands.



Legborsi Piagbara, former President MOSOP

Shell reportedly made the settlements without acknowledging wrongdoing.

A statement by Shell on Monday read, "We have always denied the allegations made against Shell in this case. However, this does not in any way diminish the tragic nature of the events of 1995."

The hanging of Saro Wiwa and the other eight men, despite world wide protests, had led to Nigeria receiving a pariah status among many countries including those in the British

Commonwealth. This status was only lifted on the return of civilian rule in Nigeria in 1999.

Shell itself, had been compelled by popular protests by the Ogoni people, to stop its exploration and exploitation of oil in the Ogoni area since 1993. It has not returned to the area for business since that time.

Looking back at the 27 years following the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight of his kinsmen by the Nigerian government, the immediate-past President of the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), Mr. Legborsi Piagbara, said the Ogoni struggle has largely been a success even though some of the key issues on which the struggle was based, have not been well addressed.

He points to the global attention that has come to climate change and the role that fossil fuel and gas flaring are playing in the destruction of the environment, as a direct consequence of the Ogoni Struggle. He said the cleanup of Ogoniland, the first to be declared by the United Nations, remains a huge achievement of the Ogoni Struggle.

He said the Ogoni have been liberated from being second class citizens in their own country, to the point where identifying

themselves publicly as Ogoni has become a thing of pride.

In addition, he said there has been a boom in education in Ogoniland, being a direct consequence of the awareness created by the Ogoni struggle which called out in their anthem that the Ogoni should educate themselves.

Piagbara said the greatest achievement of the Oputa Panel, which held a truth and reconciliation programme in 2000, was the reconciliation of the families of the Ogoni 4 and Ogoni 9. "Whichever way you want to look at it, the struggle of the Ogoni is a success," he said.

Politically, he said some form of devolution of powers has been achieved with the creation of more local government areas for the Ogoni area, while more Ogoni people have been empowered economically.

He reiterated the call on the Nigerian government to exonerate the Ogoni 9 and clear their names in the infamous trial that was used to convict and unjustly execute them.

"We asked that Ken and the eight be exonerated, that their names be cleared because the UN and even Nigerian government should clear their names because they were wrongly convicted. He said the government can do what was done in Australia where the government declared a national healing for the ills done the Aborigines and made a public apology. This can be done with the Ogoni 9, he said.

On the crisis within MOSOP, Piagbara said while it has been a challenge, some leaders of Ogoni were looking into it and in due course, shall be resolved.

Flood: Ndiomu Suspends PAP Engagements Within N/Delta

Stories by Emmanuel Obe

The devastating floods in Rivers, Bayelsa and Delta States have compelled the Interim Administrator, Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP), Maj-Gen. Barry Ndiomu (Rtd), to indefinitely suspend his scheduled stakeholders' engagement.

Ndiomu, who confirmed the suspension of PAP's activities in a statement to the media, said he was scheduled to meet stakeholders in the region when it became clear that the flood was a more urgent matter to attend to.

The PAP administrator in the statement signed by his Special Assistant, Media, Mr. Thomas Peretu, sympathised with victims of the flood across the Niger Delta region.

Describing the devastating flood as sad, Ndiomu said it was pathetic that people had been displaced from their homes, farmlands and other sources of livelihood.

He said, "It's a thing of deep regret and sympathy. I sympathise with the government and the good people of the affected states. We have all seen the very devastating effect of the floods. Roads, settlements, communities have been washed away. Quite a few have died in the process. It is most unfortunate, may their souls rest in perfect peace.



Maj-Gen. Barry Ndiomu (Rtd)

"We grieve with the families who have lost loved ones and I believe the government is doing something about it, we on our part will try within the limits of what we can, provide to assist with relief materials as part of our corporate social responsibility to the people.

"Coincidentally, I am from Bayelsa as well, so it is indeed a very sad moment for me. My people are involved in this. I feel bad but, we will do the best we can to show support and ensure that some relief and succor comes to the people who are badly affected by this flood.

"The flood forced me to postpone our stakeholders' engagement in Yenagoa. I am calling on interventionist agencies to up their game by making available more relief materials for the victims. They should also set up proper IDP camps".

APC Issues Guidelines For Sharing of Tinubu/Omo-Agege N150m Donations To Delta IDPs

By Dave Okpogadie, Asaba

As support for persons internally displaced by flood continue to flow in, the All Progressives Congress whose presidential candidate Bola Tinubu has donated N150million boosted by another N50million from its governorship candidate Senator Ovie Omo-Agege has released a guide for ensuring the donated sun trickles down to all the affected flood victims.

Delta State is among the highly impacted states with 20 states flooded.

According to the just released guidelines made available to journalists, the distribution will be led by the candidates of the party for the senatorial, House of Representatives and state Assembly in the 2023 general elections accompanied by party officials (state and local government excos) and campaign organization officials.

Also, the candidates in each of the LGA where a site is identified are expected to jointly go to the site along with party and Campaign organization officials.

The sites to be visited and amount allocated to each site

from the fifty million naira is as follows:

Delta South

1. IDP Camp, Patani (N5m)
2. Bomadi Town (N2,333,333.33)
3. Tuono in Burutu and Isaba in Warri SW (N2,333,333.33)
4. Inorin, Warri South (N2,333,333.33)
5. Late Senator Okpozo's compound in Ozoro, Isoko North
6. Hon. Joel Onovwakpo Thomas Campaign HQ in Emede, Isoko South (N2,333,333.33).

Delta North

1. Utagba Ogbe Technical College (N5m)
2. NDDC IDP Camp, Hospital Road, Kwale, Ndokwa West (N2,333,333.33)
3. DESOPADEC IDP Camp, Ozoma-Uku Primary School, Ashaka, Ndokwa East (N2,333,333.33)
4. Ewulu Mixed Secondary School IDP Camp, Ewulu, Aniocha South. (N2,333,333.33)
5. Basic Secondary School, Iillah, Oshimili North (N2,333,333.33)
6. Onne Primary School Cable Point, Asaba, Oshimili South (N2,333,333.33)

Delta Central

1. IDP Camp in Okwagbe Secondary School in Ughelli South LGA (N5m).
2. Town Hall, Ewreni in Ughelli North LGA. (N2,333,333.33)
3. Uwheru Grammar School in Ughelli North (N2,333,333.33).
4. Emadadja Community IDP in Udu LGA (N2,333,333.33)
5. Eghereka Secondary School, Ewu Urhobo in Ughelli South (N2,333,333.33).
6. Aladja Community IDP in Udu LGA. (N2,333,333.33).

The three camps visited by the party on November 2, 2022 will receive N5million each while each of the other 15 sites will receive N2, 333,333.33.

According to the guidelines, relief materials are expected to be collected from Chief Ominimini at Ughelli will include rice, beans, salt, mosquito nets, clothing materials, children wears, roofing sheets and nails. The materials will be divided into three equal parts for the three Senatorial Districts. Each Senatorial District will sign for the items which will now be divided into six parts for the six sites.

EDITORIAL

Making Disaster Management Work

Thankfully, the 2022 flood disaster that ravaged 24 states of Nigeria, leaving in its wake hundreds of deaths and tens of thousands of people homeless with destroyed livelihoods, is receding, restoring hope of resettlement for those that survived it. But, the disaster and the inept manner in which it was managed have left a lot of questions and lessons for Nigeria. A lot of those lives, homes and programmes that were lost because of the disaster, could have been saved if officials and agencies responsible for managing disaster put in mitigating processes and actions in place at the right time.

It is tragic that the disaster, whose devastating effects were predicted as far back as February 2022, nine to ten months before it struck, eventually came and wreaked havoc of monumental proportions. Ordinarily, heads should roll in departments that are responsible for disaster management for not doing enough to respond to the predictions.

From the accuracy with which NIMET predicted the disaster, it clear that Nigeria is beginning to have reliable institutions that can do their jobs. Credit must be given to the agency for this good job it has consistently done in the country in the past few years. If well utilized, NIMET climatic predictions will not only help to prevent catastrophic consequences of the predictions, people who depend on climatic conditions like farmers will find them very helpful.

But it is not enough to have accurate predictions and yet do nothing to respond or take the benefits that they offer. That is the reason why over the years, agencies, institutions and collaborations have been established with laws backing them to respond to and take leadership in disaster management. The Act establishing the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), for instance provided for the establishment of state and local government counterparts of the

agency, to build collaboration and reporting lines on disaster management. Many states, and indeed virtually all the local governments do not have their emergency management agencies in place.

Disaster management should begin to occupy centre stage in national discourse. Not long ago in Port Harcourt, there was a stampede in which dozens of people were killed. It left a sour taste in the mouth that many of those that died could have been saved if ordinary rules of crowd management were adopted.

Apart from forming a regular curriculum for schools, greater awareness needs to be formed about how to respond to disasters and emergencies. The presence of emergency organisations like the fire service should be increased and funded. Events organisers should be made to employ the services of emergency agencies and experts in managing situations that could lead to disasters. There should be better awareness campaigns in communities where flooding has become perennial to enlighten them on what to do when faced with emergencies. Such awareness should include knowing who to contact in situations of emergency and making available hotlines for people to use.

Government should also build and fund health institutions and redesign public buildings to allow them take in temporarily displaced people when such disasters occur.

Finally, it is clear that everyone knows what exacerbated the 2022 floods: the release of water from Lagdo Dam in Cameroun and greater rainfall associated with climate change. The need to build a dam to take in water from the Camerounian dam had been there since the 1980s but, nothing was done. Since 2012, it has become clear that to save Nigeria the calamity of this periodic disaster, this dam needs to be built. Let us get to work while the flood is still at the ankle.

LETTER

SSA Demands Apology From Minister Over Comments on Flood Disaster in Bayelsa

- Describes Bayelsa as Worst-Hit State - Questions Source of Minister's Flood Data

Comrade Tamarakuro Oweifie, Senior Special Assistant (SSA) to the Bayelsa State Governor on Media has frowned at comments credited to the Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development, Hajia Sadiya Farouq, that Bayelsa is not among the top-ten states hit by the devastating effects of the 2022 flood.

While expressing shock as to what basis Mrs Farouq used in making such unverified assessment, the SSA on Media wishes to put the record straight that Bayelsa stands as the worst impacted state from the floods due to several indices that are verifiable and uncontested:

Of the 33 states forecast by NIMET earlier, to be flooded this year, it is only Bayelsa State that was cut off from the rest of the world as a result of the flood.

The two land access routes into Bayelsa through the East-West Road were totally impassable at the over ten kilometers Umeh- axis of the Patani-Ugheli end, in Delta State, as well as the over 19 kilometers stretch of the Okobe-Ahoada axis in Rivers State, thereby leaving residents at their own mercy.

Petroleum Products, cash crops and other basic necessities were totally not accessible into Bayelsa State as food shortages and fuel supplies were at an all time low leaving residents at the mercy of cut throat marketers who sell as high as a thousand naira for a litre of fuel which was never so in other flood impacted states across the nation which sell a little above the stipulated price of N180 per liter.

Beyond the non-availability of staple foods for residents and internally displaced persons, Bayelsa stands as the only state nationwide with ALL Local Government Areas affected by the flood leaving indigenes at the mercy of nature in want for humanitarian assistances of which the Federal Government through NEMA, was no where to be found since late September when the flooding began.

Thirdly, one wonders where the unverifiable statistics of deaths from the flood were arrived at by the Minister as no federal agency has been spotted in the state to take stock from established state machinery to ascertain the number of deaths that have occurred in Bayelsa since the occurrence of the devastating floods?

There have been over a hundred flood induced deaths occurring in the state without due records due to the challenging terrain as most health care centers and hospitals were closed down during this period.

The Bayelsa State Teaching Hospital Okolobiri, and other rural health centers have been shut down due to flooding.

Over 300 communities affected, and mortuaries in the state capital are currently filled up to capacity due to hundreds of flood impacted deaths and with rotten corpses and cadavas, such centers have become a death trap as having access to diesel to power generating sets for the only available public hospital, FMC Yenagoa morgue has been a Herculean task.

Bayelsa stand as the only state in the federation where public and private schools have been closed down for six weeks due to flood impacted losses while other states, as well as those, whom the Minister say are on the top-ten worse hit state, have been

managing some public and private schools and getting education even amidst the menace, which is non existent in Bayelsa during this flood period.

Bayelsa State has faced a total shut down of its economy as a result of the flood as over 90% of its population have been directly or indirectly impacted by the ravaging floods.

Houses have been totally submerged in Biseni, Elemebiri, Ekperiwari, Sampou, Kalama, Tombia, and in all communities in Ekeremor, Sagbama, Kolokuma/Opokuma, Ogbia and Southern Ijaw.

The data relied upon by the Federal Government to place other northern states as worst hit than Bayelsa is erroneous and must be duly corrected.

The Minister should show us a state whose whole sources of economic livelihood were totally cut off as a result of the floods? She should show us a state that had all, and not partial impact of her LGAs under the flood? She should show us a state whose education system, public and private were totally stalled during this flood period?

Even the Federal Government Colleges in Bayelsa State are all on flood holidays as we speak while their counterpart in other states of the federation are under going academic activities?

The Minister should show us a state in Nigeria whose mortuaries were overflowing with corpses and cemetery popping up cadavas littering the streets as the deaths were humongous with no mortuaries nor burial grounds during this period to bury even the dead?

Such was the magnitude of the Humanitarian situation in Bayelsa that cannot be compared to others as the few health facilities were over stretched?

Show us a state whose health care systems were totally shut down as the hospitals and clinics were all impacted by the floods?

Show us a state whose access roads were impassable and no foods or potable water for Humanitarian needs can be accessed?

Bayelsa stands as the worst hit state as a result of the 2022 floods as the waters have been on the rise, at over 20 feet above sea levels in several areas; for the last one week a public health epidemic is looming if urgent interventions are not accessed with immediate alacrity.

Apart from the Bayelsa International airport which was not flooded as a result of the cost effective piling work done by the state government (to augment a Federal Government responsibility yet to be recouped) that has been the only access to the state but even at that the roads out of the airport are still impacted and damaged beyond repairs by the flood waters.

The land routes to Bayelaa State have been totally severed with resultant deaths recorded for those who defy the danger to go through the rising waters or patronise make shift articulated trailers or engine tug boats plying that route at cut throat fares to ferry pedestrians to neighbouring states of Delta and Rivers.

Cost of living in Bayelsa during this period have skyrocketed to an all time high with serious scarcity of staple foods

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OUR MISSION

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Mummy U, Woman Traumatized By The Floods



Eucharía Njoku (Mummy U)

Eucharía Njoku, popularly called Mummy 'U' in Okwuzi Town in Ogbá/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area of Rivers State is the picture of a woman that has become traumatized by the flooding, which has become a yearly occurrence in her community since 2012 when the first heavy floods ravaged the country.

Mummy U, who was resting under a mango shade when *National Point* visited Okwuzi to report on the flood,

By Emmanuel Obe

said though she had spent her entire savings to build for herself and family a befitting house in 2007, since the 2012 floods, she has never enjoyed her house as she has to abandon the house for several weeks during heavy floods to become a tenant in her own village.

"It has not been easy for me. I built this house in 2007 but I have not used it since 2012 when the first big flood came. This is what I have been experiencing every year," she said.

She said when the rains

come, her apartment, which we could not access because it had been submerged up to the lintel level, is submerged. When the flood recedes, she would pack back into the house, renovate it and wait for another flood season.

"I spend so much money to rehabilitate the house every year. It is a six-bedroom house with a security post and an additional apartment that I intend to use as a restaurant. I have rebuilt the fence three times. I will need support from government to help me rebuild and restart my life," she lamented. ●



Submerged house at Okwuzi



School submerged at Okoku



Using canoes to cross submerged bridge at Ebocha



Crossing submerged neighbourhood at Ebocha



Woman crossing a submerged bridge at Ebocha

Eleme Council To Introduce Automated Revenue System

By Emmanuel Obe

The Ninth Legislative Assembly of Eleme Local Government in Rivers State has begun the process of enacting a bye-law that will institute an automated system for the collection tax and other revenues in the local government area.

At the public hearing organised by the assembly to review the Revenue Bye-law of the LGA, the Leader of the Legislative Assembly, Hon. Jima Chumu, said when enacted, the proposed Revenue Bye-law would meet up with modern revenue policies and realities for the growth and development of Eleme Local Government Area. When the law comes into effect, all revenues payable to the local government would be paid into the council's accounts and no longer by cash payments.

Daniel said the public hearing was to enable members of the public and indeed stakeholders in the area to make their input into the proposed bye-law and bring their respective perspectives to bear on the proposed it.

The leader said the review of Eleme Local Government Revenue Bye-law was long overdue having been in place since 1996 when the local government was created. "It is important to know that Eleme Revenue By-Law is as old as Eleme LGA and no attempt whatsoever has been made to review it till date," he said.

He said the proposed bye-law would not only bring the local government revenue generation system to terms with modern methods of collecting revenue, it would also boost the internally generated revenue of the local government, which he said was almost non-existent.

He said a lot of resources were needed to fund the huge social and infrastructure needs of the local government and the proposed law would be useful in that regard.

The Eleme Revenue Bye-law is an executive bill initiated by the Chairman of the local government, Chief Obarilomate Olor.

After the content of the Bill was read out by the Chairman of the House Committee on Bills and Motions, Hon. Victor Goka, stakeholders present at the public hearing were invited to make their observations and contributions.

HRH Emmanuel Akobe, the Paramount Ruler of Eto, observed that the bill did not provide incentives for indigenous businesses. He also urged the lawmakers to establish a complaints unit within the council where victims of abuses by revenue officials could report such abuses.

The representative of the Eleme Area Police Command urged the lawmakers to make revenue payment system tamper-proof to eliminate fraud and diversion.

HRH Oluka Koida, the Paramount Ruler of Agbonchia community, called for the reduction in the Levy for

marriage certificate as a way of generally reducing the cost of marriage in the area.

The Secretary of Association of Nigeria Licenced Customs Agents, Chinedu Ikenga, and the Secretary of the Freight Forwarders Transport Association, said some of the items listed in the proposed bill were already being covered by the Constitution and revenue laws at the federal and state government and therefore amounted to double taxation.

They argued that overtaxing small businesses would not encourage business development and the attendant employment opportunities while observing that they were

contending with bad road network in the area, which was taking huge toll on their

businesses. Chief Nwosu Emeka, the Onne Chapter Chairman of the



L - R: Hon. Patience Dabor, Rt. Hon. Jima Chumu, leader Eleme Legislative Assembly, Hon. Jerry Ekor Nwolu, Chief whip Eleme Legislative Assembly, Hon. Josephine Obari, Hon. Isaac Obelechu

Omuolu Holds 2022 New Yam Festival

Stories by Smart Azubuikwe

With lots and lots of fanfare, the people of Omuolu in Omunwei community in Igwuruta Clan in Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State have held their 2022 New Yam Festival and wrestling competition popularly known as Egelege.

Speaking to newsmen on the sideline of the festival over the weekend, the chairman of Omuolu, Hon. Harrison Amadi, said that despite the celebration of their new yam festival and wrestling competition there was so much to thank God for

because the 2022 festival and competition were marked without any violence.

"As the new chairman of Omuolu, I want to say that there is so much to thank God for because our 2022 new yam festival and wrestling competition are marked without any violence., saying that as the new chairman of Omuolu his top priority was the development of Omuolu.

"The development of Omuolu is my top priority. That was why I bought two plots of land and donated it to the people

of Omuolu for the building of their town hall or civic centre. I also want to use this opportunity to assure my people that I will do more," Hon. Amadi promised.

He lauded the people of the area for their sense of harmony and unity, stressing the need for peaceful co-existence among residents.

The Ochi Obiri of Omuolu, Chief Christian Okpara, said that the Omuolu New Yam Festival/Wrestling was an annual event observed every year between from September to October. "We combine it with our wrestling activities, which

we call Egelege," he said.

Chief Okpara who is the chairman of Egelege (Wrestling committee said that despite the fact that they inherited this practice from their forefathers, they do not pour libation or make sacrifices to the gods of the land.

"The celebration of our new yam festival and Egelege are things we inherited from our forefathers. Although we inherited these culture and custom from our ancestors, I want to state categorically that we do not pour libation or make sacrifices to the gods."

Nkpolu Rotary Club Marks Girl-Child Day

Members of Rotary Club of Port Harcourt, Nkpolu, have marked and celebrated the 2022 International Day of the Girl-Child with the theme: 'The Girl Child; Empowerment and Knowledge of Her Potentials.'

Speaking at a seminar/awareness seminar organized by the club last Wednesday at the Amphitheatre the Rivers State University (RSU) Nkpolu Oroworukwu, Grace Adikema-Alaegbo, said that the 21st century teenagers and adolescent especially girls should not just use smartphones and other digital devices for just the sake of social media but to use it for research.

According to her, "As female students, if you have phones or social media, please do not use it for fun but use it for research to do your assignment at school. In fact, be wise while using social media. Use it wisely.

The guest speaker and legal practitioner told the girls and young participants to see themselves as intelligent enough to do well at school and later in life, adding that there is need for them to aspire to their full potential.

Adikema-Alaegbo also charged adolescent girls to be

careful with the opposite sex during relationship and dating in order to avoid school related

gender-based violence and unintended pregnancy.

She urged them to be

serious with their studies in order to come out in flying colours after their exams. ●

Presbyterian Church Seeks Expansion

...as Rt. Rev. Ndukwe tasks Nigerians on faithfulness at 87th Delegates meeting

If faith comes from hearing and believing, Nigerians have been charged to act and work faithfully and judiciously to salvage the country from her shackled condition.

The Niger Delta synod moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Nigeria, Rt. Rev. Ndukwe Daniel, gave this charge during the 87th Central Working Committee (CWC)/Men's Christian Association (MCA) of all MCA leaders and delegates held at Presbyterian parish church, Rumuomasi, Port Harcourt Niger Delta Synod comprises Bayelsa, Delta, Edo and Rivers states

"If Nigerian Leaders must get it right. They must act faithfully and judiciously and be trust worthy. It is good to be trustworthy. Being trustworthy and working judiciously as well as faithfully in the Lord should be the watchword of our leaders."

Rt. Rev. Daniel who centred his message to the delegates on: Faithfulness in Service; stated that if Nigerian remain faithful to God in their activities and engagements the

country's resources would be judiciously distributed.

"If we fear God and have faith in God we will be able to use our resources judiciously and evenly. In fact we need to use the resources God has given us successfully and judiciously. My message to the delegates at this meeting and Nigerians is that they should be faithful and trustworthy," Rt. Rev. Ndukwe emphasized.

He explained that he was satisfied with progress and growth of Presbyterian Church nationwide even there was still room to improve and do more.

Also, speaking the chairman of MCA/CWE of all Presbyterian delegates, Elder. Awa Osonwa said that the purpose of the delegates meeting was to receive reports from the 10 synods of the Presbyterian Church across the country with a view to carrying out a reform.

Elder Osonwa explained that the church has been localised in one region of Nigeria, hence the need to expand the church through evangelism and winning of souls.

"The Presbyterian Church

Nigeria has been more regionalized for several years. Localizing or planting Presbyterian Church Nigeria to other section of the country is our top priority. We also want other ethnic group in Nigeria to be part of the ownership of this church. Expanding the church is part of our evangelism. In fact, we want the locals or residents of our operational based to be involved," Elder. Osonwa added.

"We are more democratic than some orthodox or new churches. Our practice gives room for members of the church to aspire for positions or seat," Osonwa said of the Presbyterian Church.

Elder Osonwa stressed on the need for delegates to remaining good ambassador of their respective synod. "Let the delegates know that they owe responsibility to those that sent them to the CWC all delegates meeting. Let the delegates go back to their respective synod and communicate or tell their members some of the decision reached at 2022 CWC All Delegates Meeting," Elder Engr. Osonwa urged. ●

RSU VC Tasks Business Educators To Think Globally On Digital and Entrepreneurial Skills

Stories by Smart Azubuike

The Vice-Chancellor of Rivers State University (RSU), Prof. Nlerum Okogbule, has charged members of the Association of Business Educators of Nigeria (ABEN) to intensify their knowledge in digital skills acquisition and entrepreneurship.

Prof. Okogbule gave the charge during the 34th Annual National Conference of ABEN held at the university's main campus at Nkpolu Oroworukwu, Port Harcourt.

He said since businesses were now operating in a globalized economy, educational programmes for self-reliance must be adapted to the now reality. Besides, he said, business educators in Nigeria need to adopt a global outlook developing the different fields of business education.

"Business education can be seen on that aspect of vocational education involving business preparation for individuals to acquire appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes for self-reliance, the world of work and as intelligent consumers of goods and services provided by business," the VC said.

Prof. Okogbule told the participants at the conference to intellectually examine and interrogate the papers to be presented through a theoretical foundation.

He said, "The theme for the conference, 'Business Education, Entrepreneurship and Skills Acquisition in the Digital era,' is very apt in the prevailing economic situations we have in Nigeria where unemployment has become unprecedented, giving rise to criminal activities and threatening national security. Much of these negative developments can be adduced to lack of employment skills, especially among our youths.

"Business Education can have answers to them. In this conference sub-themes have been developed as areas to be explored in the quests for solutions to these problems."

The vice-chancellor disclosed that it was in response to with what members of ABEN were doing in the area of entrepreneurship and skills acquisition that the management of RSU decided to establish the Entrepreneurship Development Centre (EDC) at the main campus as well the faculty of Entrepreneurship at the Tai campus.

He stressed the need for the government to prioritise funding of Business Education for skills acquisition. "Nigeria has to get its priorities right. Education should be the priority of government, next to the provision of security and welfare for the people, which the Nigerian constitution affirms. It is because the needed priority is not accorded education that is responsible for much of Nigeria's problems, perennial insecurity, being the poverty capital of the world, unacceptable unemployment level and other socio-economic crimes."

The national president of ABEN, Prof. C. M. Ile, had said



Prof. Nlerum Sunday Okogbule
Vice-Chancellor, Rivers State University



Prof. Chika Madu Ile, National President
Association of Business Educators of Nigeria

that the annual conference provides the opportunity and platform for members to discuss and exchange ideas as they relate to business knowledge, teaching skills and current demands of the labour market.

"As members of ABEN we expect that at the end of the conference, the Association shall come up with a communique highlighting the decisions regarding the best practices in the

acquisition of skills in the digital era in business and entrepreneurship education programmes."

Prof. Ile explained that the theme of the 2022 conference was in line with contemporary emphasis on skill acquisition aimed at securing decent jobs.

"The world today and the workplace cannot progress without requisite skills which must be imparted through novel

instructional delivery; provision of requisite resource curriculum, appropriate funding, all geared towards acquiring decent jobs."

The National President stated members of the Association only conferred awards on people of integrity who have also achieved in their areas of discipline.

He described Prof. Okogbule as an astute

administrator who had achieved so much for the University as a vice-chancellor. He commended members of the 2022 LOC conference for a job well done.

The chairman of the LOC for the 2022 conference, Prof. William Ubulom, said that one of the objectives of the conference, was to create awareness for the students and members of the society on the need for skill acquisition in a digital world.

Prof. Ubulom stated that there was the need for unemployed persons particularly the youth to be self-reliant rather than waiting for white collar jobs.

He commended the management of the University for their support to ABEN, especially to members of the LOC of the 2022 conference while the secretary of the LOC at the 2022 conference, Dr. Frank Okiridu assured that members of the Association would continue to work round the clock towards imparting knowledge to students.

Our correspondent reports that the VC of RSU, Prof. Okogbule bagged ABEN Distinguished Merit Award, while Prof. Paulinus Chijoke Okwelle and Hon. Ndep Obi Ebam received ABEN Honourary Fellowship Award respectively. The last time RSU hosted ABEN conference was the 15th edition in 2003.

Egobueze Warns Students Against Vote Selling ...slams political Buccaneers

A leading university scholar, Dr. Anthony Egobueze, has charged Nigerian undergraduates to get their Permanent Voters Card (PVC) to enable them participate actively in the 2023 general elections.

Dr. Egobueze gave the charge last Wednesday at the Amphitheatre of Rivers State University (RSU) Nkpolu, Port Harcourt during a reception for Year One students of National Association of History and International Diplomacy Students of RSU.

"As students who are 18 years and above I want to tell you that the first step for your participation in a democratic process is to get your PVC. I want to admonish you that the first responsibility you have is to get your PVC, you must get your PVC and exercise your franchise. If you don't get your PVC you cannot take part in an electioneering process. When you sell your PVC you are robbing yourself of your future," Egobueze asserted.

"When you have started selling votes at student level or at student union elections then what will you do at general elections in future?"

The university don pointed out that what happened at APC and PDP primary elections in Abuja FCT this year was a rape of democracy, saying that democracy is in chains.

"What happened at the 2022 PDP and APC primary elections in Abuja sometimes this year was a rape of democracy. The actions and conducts of politicians in recent time have shown that

democracy has been held in chains. The bane of Nigeria today is the party system, which has produced mediocres and incompetent leaders."

Dr. Egobueze stated that there are several ways to contribute in a democratic process and in decision-making such as lobbying, blogging and writing petition where and when the system is anachronistic."

The political scientist also told them that they can also do a volunteer jobs for political parties in order to get their transportation fare, stressing on the need for them to make themselves available to participate.

"You need to make yourselves available when the political class are making efforts to reach the electorate. The whole exercise about democracy is about political participation. You must also know how to choose your leaders during elections."

Dr. Egobueze stated that in the political circles and in the academic there is a new lexicon called Obicracy.

"There is a new trend or what I now called obicracy. Obicracy is a condition where you have a candidate who does not have a structure yet he is running for an election and he is also a top contender," Egobueze opined.

He stated that Nigeria's woes and underdevelopment should be attributed to public office holders and political buccaneers who have been stealing public funds from the 60s till date. "The political buccaneers and the elite are our

problems in this country. They are those who are sitting in various public offices, stealing from our commonwealth. Most of the politicians have stolen from government. The money they claim to have was ill-gotten money.

He reminded the students that in political participation they must know how to choose their leaders wisely, adding that voting is the primary duty they have to know before and during election.

Also speaking, Prof. J. M. Jaja who spoke on the topic/theme: The Role of Historian/Diplomat in Nation Building, said that there were several roles and functions of a historian such as research and bridge-building, adding that a historian is a diplomat who looks at things and issues holistically.

"The historian is a diplomat and a professional. In modern era you cannot differentiate a historian from a diplomat. We train the historian or diplomat in such a way that he can handle data and dialogue."

Prof. Jaja went further: "History does not end, that is why society exists. History is the science of life. Any society that neglects history has neglected existence. So, it is important that as a society we should not neglect history. In fact, history is aimed at bringing the knowledge of the past to the present generation."

He explained that the knowledge of people with diverse history and culture can help people understand themselves and live peacefully.

On his part, the Head of department of History and International Diplomacy, Dr.

Frank Amugo expressed delight at the relative peace on the campus of RSU, stressing on the need for the fresh students of the department to maintain the same peace on the campus.

"We thank God that the campus of RSU is relatively peaceful. Our campus is peaceful. Therefore, we advise that all the newly admitted or fresh students of our department should also ensure that the peace on our campus is maintained. They should also not involve themselves in anti-social behavior," he said.

Dr. Amugo explained that diplomatic studies emanating from history means a historian must know and understand world affairs, pointing out that in the last 20 years most of the universities in Nigeria have found it more relevant to combine history and diplomatic studies hence, the influx of students studying history and international diplomacy.

The HOD told the students that in order to make good grades ad undergraduates students they must remain focused.

"I want to advise the fresh students of this department to be focused on their studies in order to achieve their goals. They should not spend their time with unprofitable engagement. They need to make good grade at least 2.2."

He assured the students of the departments that the lecturers in the department would continue to ensure that they acquire knowledge as well as ensure that they graduate in record time. ●

Bigwigs Shun PDP Campaign Committee

Stories by
Dave Okpogadie, Asaba

The People's Democratic Party (PDP) in Delta State inaugurated the Campaign Committee of the party in Asaba last Thursday with many party bigwigs staying away.

This is a clear signal that the crisis rocking the state chapter of the party is far from over as the party's national leader, Chief

James Ibori, the immediate past governor, Dr Emmanuel Uduaghan, and other party bigwigs shunned the inauguration of the Campaign Management Committee.

Other notable party chieftains that snubbed the inauguration of the campaign council to support

the governorship aspiration of Rt. Hon. Sheriff Oborevori were the lawmaker representing Delta South Senatorial District and the only PDP senator in the upper legislative chamber, Sen. James Manager; the party's governorship aspirant, Chief David Edegbie.

Other absentee political bigwigs include a former secretary to the Delta State Government,

SSG, Comrade Ovuozourie Macaulay, the party's candidate for Delta North Senatorial District, Prince Ned Nwoko, members of the House of Representatives, commissioners and special advisers among others.

Full List Of Absentees:

1. Chief James Onanefe Ibori
2. Emmanuel Uduaghan

3. Benjamin Elue
4. Amos Utuama
5. Olorogun David Edegbie
6. Peter Mrakpor
7. James Ebiowou Manager
8. Chief Patrick Egone
9. Ovuozourie Macaulay
10. Hon. Peter Onwusanya
11. Evance Ivwurhie
12. Comrade Ingo Isaiah Tam
13. Robinson Ariyo
14. Erhiateke Ibori
15. Comrade Michael Akpobire
16. Rt. Hon Leo Ogor
17. Rt. Hon. Ossai N. Ossai
18. Rt. Hon. Ndudi Elumelu
19. Rt. Hon Monday Igbuya
20. Hon Chiedu Ebie
21. Sir Itiako Ikpokpo
22. Chief Morrison Olori
23. Chief Henry Nzekwe
24. Hon Larry Ezechi
25. Hon Daniel Reyenieju
26. Dr Isaac Akpoveta
27. Timi Brisibe
28. Chief Vincent Uduaghan
29. Chief Godwin Abigor
30. Chief Frank Omare
31. Hon John Greatman Chukwuka
32. Odio Berkely Asiafa
33. Chief Bright Oweikeyi
34. Mr. Stanley Odali
35. Chief Alade Odiri
36. Hon Fred Ofume
37. Hon Christopher Izu
38. Chief Felix Ndukwe
39. Hon John Aleh
40. Sunny Areh
41. Godwin Ejinyere
42. Olorogun Esere Ejifoma
43. Isaiah Ingo
44. Florence Ayomanor
45. Judith Enamuotor
46. Amu Theodora
47. Clement Ofuani
48. Joe Iroro
49. Mercy Almona Isei
50. Pastor Champion Kpateghe
51. Hon Eloka Nwanze
52. Uche Osadebe
53. Ms Orode Uduaghan
54. Ologe Elijah
55. Prince Walter Boyo

Delta NUJ Chairman Commends Governor For Completing NUJ Secretariat

...as National President advocates for press freedom

The chairman, Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) Delta State Council, Comrade Michael Ikeogwu has commended Governor Ifeanyi Okowa for successfully completing the council's Press Centre which started since 2014.

Ikeogwu gave this commendation at the inauguration of the well-furnished journalists' house on Friday, October 28, 2022 by Governor Okowa.

The highly elated NUJ chairman said the project coming 31 years after the creation of the state has given the union an identity.

Said he: "This day will forever remain indelible in the minds of practicing journalists here in Delta State and beyond. Let me first appreciate God Almighty, the maker of heaven and earth for making this day a reality after 31 years of creation of Delta State.

"That this is happening in our time, means so much to us as a union and to me as an individual, it gives me immense joy that this magnificent edifice is being commissioned under my watch as the council chairman.

"Your Excellency, you may not know exactly what you have done for media practitioners in Delta State. For your information, this singular act of putting a roof over our heads and taking us out of the street to become landlords, has etched your name on the sand of times.

"You have given us a name and identity; you have taken us out of Egypt to our promised land. You have put unquenchable smile on the faces of members and defeated the imagination of naysayers praying that we continue to wonder about as nomads.

"That you completed the building project would have given us enough reason to celebrate, but going ahead to tastefully furnish the centre is another monumental achievement that must be counted for your administration.

"I hereby on behalf of the members of our great union express our profound appreciation to you and the government of Delta State for this gift of a press centre. We also commend you for your infrastructural development and other dividends of democracy that you have delivered across the state and urge you not to relent even as you pursue your ambition as the vice presidential candidate of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) in the 2023 general elections."



Governor Ifeanyi Okowa (middle) cuts the tape to Commission the NUJ Secretariat flanked by his deputy the Delta NUJ chairman and others

Comrade Ikeogwu appreciated the efforts of the state commissioner for Information, Mr. Charles Aniagwu who, he said committed alot in seeing that the project became a reality.

He equally commended the individual and collective efforts of the immediate past governor, Dr. Emmanuel Eweta Uduaghan, the secretary to state government, SSG, Chief Patrick Ukah, pioneer chairman of state NUJ, Comrade Ovuozourie Macaulay and his predecessor, Comrade Norbert Chiazor in the actualization of the press centre project.

Ikeogwu further noted the effort of the press secretary to the Governor, Mr. Olise Ifeajika in ensuring the welfare of journalists in the state.

He appealed to Governor Okowa to consider the provision of operational vehicles for the union and linking the edifice "to the Independent Power Plant that is serving the state secretariat for constant power supply as it, "will enable practitioners who are on

duty 24 hours of the day, discharge their duties without hindrance".

While assuring the governor who is also the vice presidential candidate of the PDP for 2023 general elections of proper media reportage of his administration's successes to Deltans and Nigerians, Comrade Ikeogwu commended journalists in the state for remaining committed to the discharge of their constitutional responsibilities as watchdogs and thanked them for their continued support to his administration. He promised to continually seek opportunities to upscale their welfare.

In his address, NUJ national president, Comrade Chris Isiguzo, lauded Governor Okowa for encouraging press freedom by improving the working condition of journalists in the state.

He said a free press, independent, vibrant, objective and nationalistic was critical precondition for good governance in a democracy.

"In most countries of Africa,

especially in Nigeria, in the past years, the greatest advertisement for the democratic dispensation is the free climate of dialogue and debate (free expression) that has been initiated and sustained by the media.

"The existence of an unfettered and independent press is necessary for democracy to flourish. The right to freedom of expression, thought and association will strengthen and encourage accountability of governments to all citizens," Isiguzo said.

He said government officials were expected to be honest, responsible, transparent, accountable and efficient in administration and service delivery.

"Where any of these is lacking or is deliberately subverted, it is the responsibility of the media to raise alarm," Isiguzo stated.

Proposed Administration Of Civil Justice Bill Will Deepen Democracy - Delta Attorney General

Delta State Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice, Isaiah Bozimo has said the three proposed bills to the Delta State House of Assembly will enhance the administration of civil justice and deepen democracy in the state.

Bozimo stated this in an interview with journalists immediately after the public hearing on the proposed bill at the state House of Assembly.

The attorney general listed the proposed bills as, Delta State Good Governance and Accountability Commission Bill 2022, Administration of Civil Justice Bill 2022, and Administration of Criminal Justice Bill 2022.

He noted that the purpose of the public hearing was to get contributions from members of the public whether for or against any of the bills, saying the essence was to ensure that the final product fit the purpose and best interest of the people in Delta State.

He also expressed optimism that the proposed bills would be enacted because they are aimed at deepening the dividends of

democracy, and improving the administration of criminal and civil justice in the state.

In a separate interview, majority leader of the Delta State House of Assembly, Hon. Ferguson Onwo said the public hearing was imperative to get information from members of the public, explaining that the state House of Assembly makes laws that are enduring over time.

He added, "We have called upon members of the judiciary, both bar and the bench, Civil Society Organisations to make their contributions on all the three important bills".

On his part Hon. Anthony E. Elekeokwuri stated that all the three bills are important, adding that the Assembly would continue to pass into law bills that would improve the lives of Deltans just as the three bills would enhance civil and criminal justice

He maintained that the Good Governance and Accountability Commission Bill, is aimed at ensuring that wastage is reduced in the system, and to make sure that people who are engaged in corrupt practices are punished appropriately. ●

Protest As Okowa's Director Fails To Enroll Over 300 Nursing Students For Final Examination

The fate of over 300 final year students of the Delta State School of Nursing from Warri, Eku and Agbor is hanging in the balance and that has resulted in a protest by the affected in Asaba, Delta State.

The students, who were billed to commence their final National Nursing Council Examination today, were informed early Tuesday morning that they were not registered for the examination by the director of the School of Nursing in the state despite paying all necessary fees.

It was learnt that the director, School of Nursing, Mrs. Gloria

Igumbor, communicated the sad development to the students when she visited them at the Delta State School Midwifery, Asaba, at about 12:05am on Tuesday.

The protest was held at the Delta State Library headquarters in Asaba, venue of the botched examination.

It was further gathered that each of the students had paid N98,000 through the director of the Delta State School of Nursing for the National Nursing Council Examination and another N15,000 for CBT training.

Cont'd on page 10

Edo Govt Will Not Condone Land-Grabbing- *Isoken Omo*

The Edo State Government has reclaimed a road in Uteh Community, Upper Mission Extension of the Benin metropolis, which it alleged was illegally appropriated by the proprietor of Divine Providence School for a building project.

Indigenes and residents of the community, it said had in a viral video raised alarm around 4pm on Saturday, November 5, 2022, that the school proprietor was raising a fence to cut off the

...Seals Divine Providence Sch, Shops To Reclaim Encroached Road Portion

Stories by **Iduozee Efe Paul, Benin**

road from public use, and called on the government to come to their aid.

Commissioner for Physical Planning, Housing, Urban and

Regional Development, Isoken Omo, who led the ministry's enforcement team to the site on Sunday morning, said government, would not condone activities of land-grabbers in the state.

"Following the video complaint of a street being fenced

by the owner of Divine Providence School at Palace Road, Uteh Community, Upper Mission Extension, an enforcement team from Ministry of Physical Planning, Housing, Urban and Regional Development visited the site today and reclaimed the road.

"The school was sealed as its

fence is on the road. Other contraventions in the area were attended to particularly, the row of stores along Upper Mission Extension by the Enogie's palace."

She commended residents of the area for their vigilance, and assured Edo people that the government's resolve to stamp out impunity in the state remains steadfast. She urged anyone with complaints about building infractions to call the Ministry. ●

Nigerians Are Bereaved, Tired Of Present Reality In The Country - *Eholor*

...Says Obi's Race Not About Him But Driven By Mass Cry For Change

Rights activist and chieftain of the Labour Party (LP), Comrade Patrick Eholor says the Peter Obi movement for the 2023 presidential elections is not about Peter Obi per se but about the masses who are desirous of a better life.

Eholor said Peter Obi is just a man driving the movement on the platform of the Labour Party, and the people are tired of the present state of things in the country and are ready for a real change.

The president of One Love Foundation, made the declarations while fielding questions from journalists shortly after a strategic and stakeholders meeting of the LP, which held in Benin city, Edo State.

Comrade Eholor said the party is fully prepared to hold its presidential rally in the state this month and also prepared to win the presidential election. He added that traditional chiefs and monarchs in the state have been reached to make the rally a huge success.

Said he: "The Peter Obi movement is not about an individual, it is about the masses. I think we are fully prepared. We have reached out to traditional chiefs and monarchs in the state."

"Labour Party is going to do something unique that no one has seen before."

"So, it is not about Peter Obi, it is beyond him, he is just one who is driving it on the platform of Labour. If he was to be an independent candidate, I believe

the narrative would still be the same because he has the pedigree, he has the character that we need."

Describing Nigeria as a bereaved country, the rights activist said: "It is about us, it is a massive movement; it is a collective effort of a people who are bereaved. We are bereaved metaphorically. It is not when you lose your parents alone that you are bereaved."

"When things are not going well in your life, you are bereaved. We empathize with Nigeria and we don't want this house called Nigeria to fall, so, we are all ready and willing to change this house."

"We cannot continue to wallow in poverty as Nigerians, we cannot continue to deny our children of education." ●

Groups Pledge Support Tinubu APC Presidency

Some actors, producers and entertainers under the auspices of Progressive Coalition of Entertainers have declared total support for the presidential candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC) Asiwaju Bola Tinubu.

The group, led by popular actor, Saheed Balogun announced this during a courtesy visit to Lagos Speaker Mudashiru Obasa on Friday at the Assembly's complex in Lagos.

Obasa, who received the group, urged them not to relent in their effort to ensure victory for the APC presidential candidate in the election.

He said: "Our task is to involve people, enlighten them and make them see reasons why they should continue to support APC. We know the group has always supported the party and we want them to

continue. "To us, every vote is an investment because every single vote counts."

Balogun said the group of over 60 celebrities had come to endorse Tinubu because of his impact on the development of Lagos.

He said: "Since the campaign has commenced, the artists, having large followers on social media, see it as an opportunity to reach out and engage prospective voters."

"This is because we see Tinubu as one who had done a lot to qualify as the next president of Nigeria and we hope to continue to release the presidential candidate's achievements."

"Asiwaju has done well and it is time to pay back. Every successive government continues to build on his foundation." ●

WMA To Partner Edo Govt On Quality Healthcare

...As Obaseki Laments Brain Drain Of Nigeria Medical Doctors

President of World Medical Association (WMA), Dr. Osahon Enabulele says the world body is fully ready to collaborate with the Edo State government to render good and quality healthcare to the people.

The former NMA president made the disclosure when he

and his entourage paid a thank you visit to Governor Godwin Obaseki at Government House, Benin city.

Dr. Enabulele who is also the former Edo State NMA chairman told the governor they came to appreciate his support and seek

areas of collaboration.

Said he, "Your Excellency, we have come not to make demands but to thank you for your support for my inauguration as president of WMA on October 7 in Berlin Germany this year. The last time we came we spoke at length on

what the state of healthcare would look like in term of the global world medical association and we asked very fervently for your presence and Your Excellency response to that request was in the affirmative- 'Dr. Osahon Enabulele, you belonged to that group in Berlin. The State Government will be with you there both in spirit, body and physically. And we are here to say thank you for being able to fulfil that promise'."

He said the governor went beyond that.

"Flowing from which you did a lot more. You galvanized a lot of support for us and ensured we all arrived safely in Berlin in Germany and to ensure we all had a good time in Berlin," supports which memories he said will in their consciousness.

Continuing, he said, "The night the deputy governor called me, it changed the whole atmosphere when he said, 'we are here in Berlin'. I said wao! Edo is in Berlin. I want to say to you Your Excellency, you were the major contributors to the success of the event in Berlin."

"I am happy the Deputy Governor, Philips Shaibu was in Berlin. I want to also use this opportunity to thank the Edo state government for according us that respect in Germany."

"I want to say that the WMA looks forward to a very strong collaboration in health with the Edo State government. We want to thank you for this supports, and to say we will not take it for granted. First for the hospitality you granted us when we came to pay a visit before we went to Berlin."

"Secondly, the huge support you gave to us, I want to thank you again and to let you know that we have come back from Berlin,

Germany. Not only have we come back from Berlin, we are here to strike further collaboration and partnership with the Edo State government."

"Immediately after my inauguration on October 7, 2022, we hit the ground running because it is clear that the expectations from an African presidency in WMA is very high. And will not in any way want the enthusiasm or the kind of confidence that is reposed in this presidency to evaporate so soon."

"We have since hit the ground running, and we thought that the very first port of call is to come to Edo State to let the government know that we have started work very aggressively. We are very open to drive further collaborations with the Edo State government in the various areas we have initiated to the end of my last face."

"We are trying to bring out more actionable programmes that we can use to drive and advance quality healthcare for Africa and Asia, looking again to the whole issue of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), with the readiness with the Universal Health Coverage which is SDG3."

"In Nigeria and Africa, the issue of human health is very vital. Everywhere we go that has been the major issue. We are looking at it again and work has started in WMA since and more several others."

The new world medical association president promised to bring the world down to the state to see the work being done there.

"One thing I said last time, and we are going to be serious about it, is that before my tenure ends as the president of WMA, the whole world will come to Benin city to see what we have here in Benin and to strike health partnership with the Edo State government."

Edo APC Accuses Obaseki Over The Demolition Of Central Hospital

...Faults Governor For Collecting N60 Billion From Council's Purse Without Local Govt Polls



Governor Godwin Obaseki

The Edo State chapter of the All Progressives Congress (APC) has criticized the administration of Governor Godwin Obaseki over several demolition of structures across the state capital for purported developmental purposes which the party said are shrouded in secrecy, collapsed infrastructure and

allegedly plunging the state into huge indebtedness besides running a dictatorial government.

Speaking in a press conference in Benin City, on Thursday, 20 2022, the state chairman of the party, Col David Imuse (rtd) accused Obaseki of turning the state into a personal empire and has "conveniently castrated the state legislature, emasculated the judiciary and operates the executive branch as the Sole Administrator."

Imuse alleged that Obaseki has deliberately refused to conduct local government elections and have solely kept the councils' statutory allocations allegedly to clear a purported N60billion debt he claimed they owe.

"In very simple terms, the Obaseki government has boosted the domestic debt of the state since 2016, by N75Billion,

exclusive of State's foreign debt of over \$280million from available records. The second most indebted state in Nigeria, thanks to Governor Obaseki is Edo. Now he has just forwarded a bill to the illegal House of Assembly for an additional 25bn bond to further impoverish generations of Edo citizens yet unborn."

"As we speak right now, Governor Obaseki has demolished the Central Hospital; Benin City and his plans to replace it with a motor park has failed. His anticipated MoU for the park died on arrival. His partners were shocked that he destroyed a century old legacy hospital for a garage, so they backed out. Edo people want to know what he intends to do with the demolished hospital since his clandestine move has failed."

"Now that the governor has demolished the library which was the citadel of reading for the educational conscious Edo children, the governor should be highly interrogated to tell Edo people who bought the Library space and for how much," he stressed. ●

St. Agnes Church OganAma Holds 2022 Harvest ... Launches N20m Church Building project

Stories by Smart Azubuike

Members of St. Agnes Parish Church Ogan Ama Deanery, Diocese of Okrika (Anglican Communion), Church of Nigeria have held their 2022 Annual Adult Harvest/Thanksgiving Service with the Harvest of Generational Blessing Genesis 22:18 as well as organized the launching of N20 million church building expansion project.

Speaking while delivering his sermon at the event, Dr. (Prof.) Ogan pointed out that the theme for their 2022 annual adult harvest is like a bank customer who deposits and receives money from his bank.

"The theme of the harvest this year is like a customer who opens an account at his bank to deposit and receive money from his bank. The more the bank customer deposits the more he receives. Therefore, the more you give to the Lord, the more blessings you receive."

Prof. Ogan stated that he and members of the church were grateful that Sir Engr. Kingsley Sundays delivered the sermon for the 126 Adult Harvest and Thanksgiving, adding that the sermon was inspirational.

"So, it is quite apt or heart warning for us to be part of this year's harvest celebration. In fact, I must tell you that the sermon delivered this morning by Sir. Kingsley Sundays at the 126 annual adult harvest of our church was quite inspirational. On that note, I may honourably declared the 126 annual adult harvest and thanksgiving open,



Sir Iboroko Ogan MNIM, JP

Alabo Prof. Ogan declared. He commended the invited guests to their 2022 annual adult harvest and the entire congregation of St. Agnes Ogan Ama for their financial support and contributions.

Earlier, the secretary of the 2022 harvest planning committee, Sir Iboroko Ogan, said that there was the need for the Christian faithful of the church both at home and abroad to thank God and show appreciation to their Creator for keeping them alive from last year to this year.

"It is very important for members or Christian faithful of this church who are both at home and abroad to realize that we are among the living from last year to this year. You and I are so fortunate that we have done it from last year to this year.

In fact, we need to thank our Creator for all his blessings and mercies upon our lives from 2021 to 2022," Sir Ogan emphasized.

The secretary pointed out that since the foundation of the existing church and the growing membership of the church was on the increase, there is absolute need to expand the church.

"In view of the numbers of years this church has existed from the 70s and the increasing number of members, week-in week-out, there is the need for the expansion of our present church. This is the main reason why we have initiated the launching of N20 million church expansion building project. However, at the same time, we are looking at the first quarter of next year for the

foundation laying for the expansion of our church building project," Sir Iboroko assured.

He commended members of the 2022 Harvest Planning Committee for their input and understanding.

On his part, the Vicar/Rector of the church, Ven. Precious Nyanaboibi (JP) said that members of the congregation of the church are indebted to the invited guests, particularly the Amayanabo of Okrika Kingdom who was the Royal Father of the Day.

"We want to specially thank the royal father of Day, the Amayanabo of Okrika Kingdom, HRH T.E.O. Ogube (rtd) for his presence and support. And to other traditional rulers and our invited guests who are worshipping with us today, we salute you. We say may God bless you and may harvest celebration never cease in your respective families. We thank you for coming. We are very grateful. The good Lord will continue to sustain you all," Ven. Nyanaboibi lauded. He described the 2022 harvest as beautiful.

On her part, the mother of the Day, Princess. Dr. Henrietta Ogan JP told members of the Church particularly women and children to be prayerful and hold on to God at all time.

Our correspondent reports that among those who attended the harvest; include Chief Hon. Dr. Godknows Tam George, Chief Engr. Henry Seminitari.

He also reports that members of PCC, MU/WC, CMF and AYC of the church carried out offering in kind.

Prof. Ordu Gives Reasons For Brain-Drain ... Gives medical students tips on how to regain lost ground

A leading medical practitioner in Nigeria, Prof. Kenneth Ordu says it will be difficult if not impossible to stop brain-drain among medical practitioners in Nigeria because the doctors are looking for something better for themselves overseas.

Prof. Ordu made this known over the weekend in an exclusive chat with *National Point* in his office in Port Harcourt.

According to him, the reasons for brain-drain among the people in the medical community is because they are looking for something better. In fact, the doctors and nurses who leave Nigeria for overseas are looking for a better income and perfect pay package as well as greener pasture.

Prof. Ordu who is the current Dean of college of medical sciences of the Rivers State University (RSU) explained that in Nigeria and in some third world nations the equipment for medical doctors to practice is not there in Nigeria but in developed nations like the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada they have enough medical equipment. "Therefore, medical tourism or brain-drain can only be reduced if the reverse will be the case. In fact, in Nigeria there is nothing here."

Prof. Ordu stated that if the system is good the environment would also be good for medical doctor to practice their trade, saying that the doctors should not be blamed.

"If the system is good. The environment will be good. In fact, if we have a good health care system the medical doctors will be in Nigeria to practice."

Prof. Ordu pointed out that despite the incessant medical exodus there is still hope for Nigerian patients.

"Although the patients in Nigeria cannot get

exactly what they want from the entire medical community. However, the Nigerian patients should still place hope on Nigerian based medical doctors," Prof. Ordu re-assured.

The Dean stated that though the just concluded ASUU strike embarked upon earlier in the year and later suspended by members of the union of Federal Government owned university could have effect on medical students at the Federal owned-university, but that the students should key in and brace up to follow their respective universities timetable, stressing on the need for students to keep tab. The just suspended ASUU strike by members in federal universities may actually affect the medical students and some other students of the federal tertiary universities across the country. However, if the students have read they should keep themselves ready to follow the academic time table in order to cover lost ground "Academic activities are something you must keep tap with. It is something you cannot give space," Prof. Ordu warned.

He commended Governor Ezenwo Wike and the vice chancellor of RSU Prof. Nleum Okogbule for their support to the RSU College of Medical Sciences, assuring that both the students and the lecturers of the college would continue to set standard for other institution of higher learners to follow.

You will recall that in the last 2 to 3 years Nigeria has this highest numbers of medical doctors in United Kingdom, India and Pakistan. This ugly development of brain-drain has affected Nigeria's 25% universal health coverage, which was recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) for each nation.

Church Elder Sentenced To Life In Prison For Killing Wife Of 18 Months

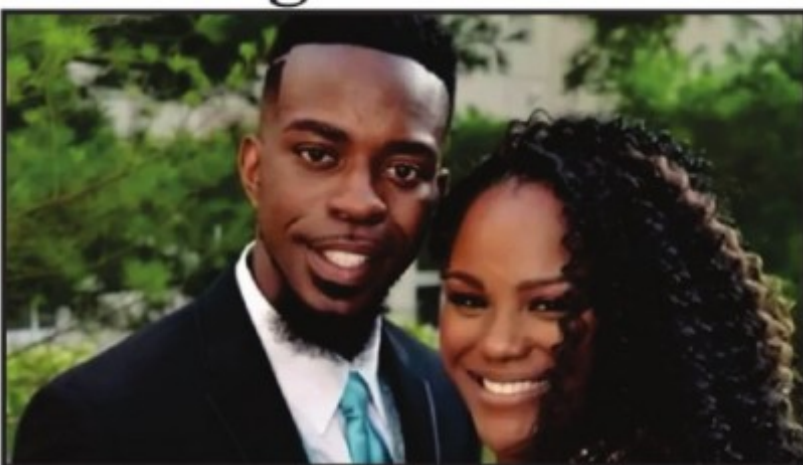
Tanisha Harris left her bank job for lunch in January 2018 and never returned. In August, her former husband, Robert Lee Harris, was convicted of her murder.

A former Kansas City church elder will spend the rest of his life behind bars for killing his wife 18 months after they were married.

According to The Kansas City Star, Robert Lee Harris, 35, was convicted in August of first-degree murder in the 2018 strangling of Tanisha Harris, 38. He was sentenced on Thursday to 50 years in prison without the possibility of parole.

The Harrises both attended a non-denominational south Kansas City church called Repairers Kansas City, where she served as associate minister. She was reported missing on Jan. 8, 2018, when she left her job at a bank for lunch and never returned.

Police first made contact with the spouse as they investigated a report of a domestic disturbance that day at the apartment the couple shared in Overland Park, Kansas. He was found alone when they arrived after a neighbor and apartment manager reported hearing



Former Kansas City church elder Robert Harris (left) has been sentenced to life in prison for the 2018 strangling of Tanisha Harris, (right) his wife of 18 months. (Photo: Screenshot/YouTube/Indisputable with Dr. Rashad Richey)

loud noises coming from the residence. Red stains on the carpet and broken glass were reportedly visible to the officers.

Robert Harris called them back to their home hours later, wanting to report his wife missing. 41 Action News noted in 2018. Overland Park Police became suspicious after interviewing him.

The former church elder eventually acknowledged his involvement in Tanisha Harris' disappearance and revealed the location of her

body, which was later found in a field in Raymore, Missouri, enclosed in a black garbage bag. An autopsy revealed his wife had died by strangling and her body showed other signs of physical trauma.

Repairers KC Pastor Carlton Funderburke previously recalled how the twomet.

"They began to correspond and began to have conversations and the embers of romance began to bubble, and so they had a long distance relationship

for quite some time," said Funderburke, according to 41 Action. "He relocated here primarily for her."

The couple got married in July 2016.

According to The KC Star, authorities allege that Robert Harris spent the morning of his wife's murder making trips to Walmart, where he purchased a garbage can, plastic bags, carpet cleaner, and a filleting knife.

Funderburke told 41 Action the Harrises never displayed any signs of relationship problems.

"There's no way to even wrap your mind around that to even see that would be in realm of the possible," he said, 41 Action reported. "It doesn't seem real, it seems like a very bad nightmare."

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The post Church elder sentenced to life in prison for killing wife of 18 months appeared first on TheGrio.

UEFA Champions League Fixtures (Round of 16 Full Draw)

Liverpool	Vs	Real Madrid
Dortmund	Vs	Chelsea
RB Leipzig	Vs	Man City
AC Milan	Vs	Tottenham
Club Brugge	Vs	Benfica
Frankfurt	Vs	SSC Napoli
PSG	Vs	Bayern Munich
Inter Mila	Vs	Porto

Notes: First legs fixed for February 14 and 15, and 21 and 22.

Second legs slated for March 7 and 8, and March 14 and 15, 2023. The winners of the 2 legs of the each of the matches will advance to the quarter-finals

Rivers Enterprising Youths Are Wasting - Kwane

Stories by
Clifford Christopher Solomon

The governorship candidate of Zenith Labour Party ZLP and former deputy speaker Rivers State House of Assembly Rt. Hon. Leyii Kwane, has said that enterprising youths of the state were wasting away.

Kwane, who spoke to *National Point*, said that the

youths need to be recovered and restored. "It is not about myself," he said

The candidate, who said he had to turn down monetary offer to him to abandon his political resolve said, "If I was looking for money I know what I was offered in December last year. Four to Five hundred million naira is not a joke; if I put a hundred million for my children and put two hundred million naira for my wife and use the rest I will live a good



Rt. Hon. Leyii Kwane, Governorship candidate of Zenith Labour Party ZLP

"For me as a person I have been so burdened with the way he has been doling monies - two hundred million here, three hundred million naira there while Rivers State needs government attention in all aspects of life.

"The debt profile of this state we may not know it all until we get there, but we have volunteered to rescue Rivers State because the state is blessed," he said.

He disclosed that he had to fight to effect a change in governance to save the future generations. "If I don't do what I am doing now there won't be hope and future for my children but I am doing it for our children, for our tomorrow, I don't sleep beyond four hours a

day because the damage to our psyche is terrible.

"We are not going to talk about building roads, but had to read just the mentality of our people. Do you know that you can run one-way from Eleme Junction to Government House and it is normal? We live in a society where the abnormal has become normal and if you try to correct them it is you that something is wrong with," he said.

The former deputy speaker of the Rivers State House of Assembly, revealed that he recently attended a valedictory session of a former member and was shocked to find out that only five members out of 32 members now form a quorum instead of 11.

"Imagine in Assembly that has 32 members and five members now form quorum or is it the judicial system that is not in the pocket of governors? My government will change the narrative," he said. ●

WMA To Partner Edo Govt ...

Cont'd from page 8

"When we were in Berlin the atmosphere was charged with the presence of the state government and the Oba of Benin delegates because it coincided with the several things you saw in Berlin, we also have the opportunity to visit their museum in Germany," Dr. Enabulele stated.

Responding, Governor Obaseki said the state government will continue to strengthen and engage with the WMA in order to improve healthcare services in Edo State.

He thanked and commended the Dr. Osahon Enabulele for making the state, Nigeria and Africa proud as the first president of WMA in Africa.

Obaseki stated, "We as a state have no choice than to strengthen our healthcare system in the state." He posited that there is no doubt that at this time we are in the era of challenge when it comes to the issue of health.

He lamented that brain drain has never been as high in the country as now as medical doctors are leaving the country in droves searching for greener pastures abroad and appealed to the NMA president to use his

position to see how the state government can address the healthcare predicament in the state health sector.

Deputy Governor of Edo State, Comrade Philip's Shaibu, joined the WMA members to commend the governor for the support to the medical body.

He also extolled the WMA president, Dr. Osahon Enabulele for making Edo people, Nigeria and the entire Africa proud by his new position.

Shaibu said it is a great thing and cause for "celebration for us in Edo state, as we celebrate Dr. Osahon Enabulele as the WMA president".

He added that the elevation of Dr. Enabulele is coming at a time the state government is changing and restructuring the mind-set of its businesses towards the growth and development of the state.

"This young man that is being celebrated is an Edo son. It is something that brings pride, electrified and emotional, to all of us. A country that is begging for leadership in all aspects, and one of us is being celebrated in his profession across the world. That means, we have a lot of persons from this country that can change the system and bring good leadership to our country," he stressed. ●

life. But is that what life is all about? Our politicians and youths have been reduced into articles of trade."

The ZLP governorship candidate flayed the current political style of Rivers State governor, Chief Nyesom Wike, saying his best days were when he was chairman of Obio/Akpor local government.

2023: APC Will Win In Rivers – Alex Wele

The All Progressive Congress candidate for Obio/Akpor State Constituency II in the Rivers State House of Assembly 2023 general election Chief Hon. Alex Wele, has said that the Executive Order 21, which Governor Nyesom Wike issued recently was within his powers.

"It is the right of the governor and government of Rivers State to come up with laws that should govern the conduct of the timing of the law matters. But the timing is a bit suspicious otherwise, the law is for everybody.

"I don't see it targeted at APC, even in PDP there are also factions so if it is about stopping people from campaigning primary and secondary school are not the only place campaigns can be done," he said.

Wele said he would not want to impute any negative meaning because that law also affected PDP. "The only issue I have with it is the nonrefundable N5 million because if for instance you pay N5 million and at the end of the event nothing is damaged, some refund should be made to those who used the facility, like N3, 4 million while one million should be for the facility used."

Hon. Alex Wele refuted insinuations that there in disconnect between the state APC and the national leadership. "There is no disconnect between the state and national of the APC. The President recently inaugurated the presidential campaign council which the former minister of transportation, Rt. Hon. Rotimi Amaechi, is a member. Amaechi was not in attendance due to the burial

ceremony of his father-in-law at Anambra State, which was a coincidence. He genuinely took permission both from President Muhammadu Buhari and the presidential candidate, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu," he said.

The Obio/Akpor state constituency II hopeful in the Rivers State House of Assembly said he has confidence that APC in Rivers state will win the 2023 general election overwhelmingly.

"The assurance of APC winning is very high. IT is healthy to have other political parties to contest for people to have space to choose. But in terms of winning election 2023 is restricted to just two political parties, the APC and the PDP. But PDP will lose this contest as the PDP is no longer as formidable as they were in the past. The internal crisis in PDP is an advantage for us." ●

Protest As Okowa's Director Fails To Enroll Over...

Cont'd from page 7

Mrs. Igumbor, whose reign as director of the School Nursing has been greeted with controversies, was reported to have threatened to expel any student who protested against the development.

According to the students, Igumbor failed to enroll them for their final national nursing exam citing technical issues in the registration process.

The situation resulted in a riot by the students who purportedly locked up the director.

She was also alleged to have boasted before the students that Governor

Ifeanyi Okowa was aware of the development and was solidly behind her in whatever action she takes regarding the three schools and warned that no amount of protest could force the governor to remove her.

With the development, the over 300 nursing students comprising 92 from Warri Nursing School, 110 from Eku and 112 from Agbor Nursing School will not be graduating at the end of their three years academic session.

Mrs. Igumbor was also heard in an audio calling the students "idiots" for daring to ask her the fate of their exam during the visit to the

final year students at the School of Midwifery in Asaba.

Meanwhile, the commissioner for Health in the state, Dr. Mordi Onoye, who visited the visibly angry students described the incident as a "wicked act and highly regrettable".

Dr. Mordi, who claimed he was not aware of the development, assured the protesting students that the state government will take appropriate action against those responsible for the non-enrollment of the final year students for the all-important council examination. ●



Gov. Ifeanyi Okowa

Don't Touch My Land, Climate, Crop, Culture - African Women Message To COP 27

By Constance Meju

As the world converges in Egypt to further dialogue to save mother earth from man induced destruction under COP 27, African women who are direct burden bearers of the devastating effects of the plundering of Africa's natural resources by western exploiters, have sent a strong message to the world environmental gathering holding November 6-18.

Tired of struggling with devastated lands that yield little to nothing because of decades of abuse by multinational corporations with worsening climate conditions and the attendant poverty, displacement and ill-health they face, the women after a four-day assembly where experiences, challenges and concerns were discussed, demanded hands-off their land, healing of the destroyed land to keep their environment healthy and the people thriving again.

The women, drawn from 12 natural resource rich countries were in Igburuta, Port Harcourt, Rivers State from October 17-20 including Mali, Guinea, Liberia, Côte D'Ivoire, Cameroon, Senegal, Niger, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Sierra Leone, Burkina-Faso, Mozambique, the Democratic Republic of Congo and host country, Nigeria.

All through the Assembly, it was cries of, "Leave natural deposits, fossil fuel in the soil; don't touch my land, don't destroy my climate; don't destroy my culture."

The week-long African Women's Climate Assembly ended with a united call for an end to gas flare and other extractive industry activities that impact negatively on the climate.

The over 150 women activists from 14 countries in West and Central Africa met in Port Harcourt, under the aegis of the Women's Climate Assembly, with the theme: 'African Women Unite on the Frontlines of Climate Crisis.'

Organized by WoMIN African Alliance in collaboration with Kebetkache Women Development and Resource Centre, the event provided a platform for community women leaders and activists from Guinea, Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, South Africa, Niger and host Nigeria to come together and share their experiences on the impact of the climate crisis.

Welcoming all to the Assembly, executive director of Kebetkache Women Development and Resource Center, Obomowang Emem Okon noted, "We have all experienced climate change.



Perm. Secretary Rivers State Ministry of Women Affairs, Mrs. Uchechukwu Uriri

This programme is anchored by Womin African Alliance and Kebetkache for all of us to come and discuss".

She said multinationals have been digging crude since 1956 in Nigeria to extract oil, trade, make money for government and the companies with very little gain for the community people.

"Promised development were not understood by our fathers. They took our land lying to our chiefs. Women were not consulted and with the extraction came spills destroying our lands, waters, poisoning our air, heating us up.

"Life expectancy is now 40 because of the poison from extractive activities. Rain water is now poison, acid rain; things are more difficult for women without clean water. Global warming has changed the climate with seasons interlocking- we are all struggling to survive, to have food, water".

Emem said how to get the African women voice heard in Egypt at COP27 for solutions was the target of the Assembly as she urged the women to feel free to narrate their experiences, think solutions and make new friends.



Executive Director Kebetkache Emem Okon (left) and Activist Cynthia Ebiere Bright

The event was also said to represent "the commencement of a permanent assembly of African women for climate and development justice".

According to Womin, "Participating women activists are impacted by destructive extractive activities such as mining, oil and gas extraction; industrial agriculture, fishing and forestry; and mega energy and infrastructure projects.

"These are the women who shoulder the worsening impacts of climate disasters in their daily lives despite having contributed nothing at all to the growing climate crisis."

The four-day event, further provided "a critical space to centre African women's voices and enabled women to share their experiences; build new critical knowledge to inform strategies of resistance; learn from each other; imagine a different community, society, and Africa; and deepen pan African solidarity.

A joint statement from the assembly stated:

"Participants asserted their rights to free, prior and informed consent as well as their right to say 'No' to destructive development agendas that harm communities and rob them of their lands and livelihoods in the name of profit for a few.

"The assembly presented a timely opportunity for women to discuss real solutions and development alternatives to the neoliberal economic model that continues to

destroy our natural resources and extract benefits for countries in the global North at the cost of countless African lives."

The Nigerian delegation to the Assembly, in their contribution to the communiqué arrived at the end of the meeting, called for an end to gas flaring in the African country, adding "We don't want the gas burning any more. Let us have our lives today because we don't know what will happen to our next generation and their times will be even worse than this."

The recent floods in Nigeria have left large swathes of agricultural land under water, reportedly displaced over a million people, with over 3,000 dead and three core Niger Delta states - Bayelsa, Rivers and Delta - heavily bearing the brunt.

Describing this as "a stark reminder to participants and the world to act with urgency to address the roots of the climate crisis," WoMin and Kebetkache noted that "though Africa has contributed less than three per cent of all carbon emissions since 1880 and is warming faster than any other region in the world, it has contributed least to the climate crisis.

By 2050, as many as 86 million Africans will be forced to migrate within their own countries due to climate change."

The delegation from Senegal to the African women climate assembly demanded that African governments participating in COP27, "take into consideration where the oil and other resource exploration will happen because our communities should not suffer for this"

The Senegalese stated, "Communities' rights matter! Give to communities what belongs to them. Women must be involved in negotiations wherever there are decisions to be made about oil and resources. We women are responsible for life. We handle households, livelihoods, and everything essential for daily survival and so we must be present in negotiations too."

The African women resolution stressed that the "deepening of extensive movements of African women in countries, and at a pan-African level, resisting extractive activities, demanding sovereign debt cancellation, organizing for the climate debt to be settled by historically responsible countries and polluters, and deepening living alternatives offers Africa, its governments and citizens, is the road to a just and equitable future," and translates to climate justice for all.

#WomenClimateAssembly
#AfricanWomen4ClimateJustice
#COP27



Uniport drama group



The women on a site visit



A group of the Women Climate Assembly participated

Picking The Pieces Of The Flood Disaster

The floods, which started sometime in September 2022 in the northern parts of the country, eventually swept through 24 states, particularly states lying along the Niger, Benue, their tributaries and distributaries, affecting more than five million people. As the flood spread south, it submerged entire communities and local governments.

As the people return to their wrecked and empty homes, some of them with loved ones lost, it can only be imagined what is going through their minds.

Last Saturday, the Flood Management Task Force set up by the Rivers State Governor to reach out to victims of the flood disaster that impacted six local government areas of the state gave out each of the impacted local government areas a truckload of relief materials, mainly rice, yams, garri, cooking oils and noodles.

The materials came in the wake of the gradual receding of the floods, when some victims had begun to return home from refugee camps and other temporary shelters to where they had escaped in September and October after they were driven from their homes by the worst flood disaster in Nigeria's history.

Many of the displaced people holed up in improvised camps in the affected areas had complained that relief materials and support promised by the governor had not reached them.

But the Chairman of the task force, Dr. George Nwaeke, while handing over the materials to local government chairmen said the materials were never too late as the victims would continue to need help even after returning home. The most impacted areas in Rivers State were in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni, Ahoada West, Ahoada East and Abua/Odual local government areas. There were also communities in Emohua and Akuku Toru that were also seriously impacted.

A state like Bayelsa, lying deep in the Niger Delta and occupying a long stretch along the coast where the Niger empties in the Atlantic, was trapped and cut off by the flood, leaving residents hopeless and helpless at the mercy of cold, mosquitoes,

By Emmanuel Obe

wild animals and disease.

The people faced death everyday as help could not reach much of the impacted areas because of lack of access. And death did come in large numbers. Within the first week more than 600 people were reported dead, about 50 of them were drowned in an overloaded boat that tried to ferry people from an impacted community in Ogbaru Local Government Area to a safe haven. Some others, members of a family in Nzam Community in Anambra East Local Government Area, died while asleep in a submerged house. Some people that braved to cross the heavily flooded section of the East-West road at Ihuike, Ahoada East Local Government Area of Rivers State were swept away. One pathetic case was that of a woman, who lost grip of her toddler as the water current swept off her feet. The kid went away with the current.

Commuting between the communities along the impacted areas became impossible because of the collapse of the East West road. Video clips were shown of inter-state commuter buses that were swept off the road by the flood and many heavy duty vehicles that fell as they groped through the current.

The Port Harcourt-based Civil Society Organisations, which drafted a team to monitor the floods in Rivers state returned with a heart wrenching report. Solomon Lenu, the public relations officer of the group said tens of thousands of people were caught behind flood lines in Engenni on the banks of the Orashi River and Abua/Odual areas as they could not have access to help or escape.

Efforts to get relief materials by air to victims cut off by land were foiled because there were no landing grounds near their safe havens. Other states severely affected were Rivers, where six local government areas were impacted; Delta, where 21 local government areas were affected, Anambra with eight LGAs, Kogi, where several local government areas including the state capital, Lokoja were impacted, Benue, Adamawa, Jigawa, Niger and Kebbi.

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Family evacuating in a canoe over Nsesa River



Kids swimming in front of a submerged home



A motorcyclist wades through the flood at Ebocha



Submerged homes



A flooded school compound in Omoku

Picking The Pieces Of The Flood Disaster

Cont'd from page 12

Kolo Emmanuel, who wrote on the flood said the damage done by the flood might not be immediately catalogued because most of the destructions are still under water and it would take a long time to estimate the full losses. "But it runs into several billions of dollars. This is besides the human lives lost and still being counted," he said. Houses collapsed, costly and sensitive equipment like the multimillion dollar DNA machine at Yenagoa Diagnostic centre, were destroyed, farmlands were destroyed. There are real fears that this may occasion food shortage next season because most of the areas affected are grain belts.

It was not only the worst natural disaster that has befallen the nation, the 2022 flood disaster also brought out the worst in emergency management in the country. It took more than a month in some cases for help to begin to trickle down to victims, by which a lot of damage had been done.

The East-West Road, the only road connecting all the six states of the South-South region was destroyed by the flood, which washed off the road in several places. The Federal Executive Council had responded by approving a contract for the reconstruction of the road.

Occurring in an election year, government officials were absorbed in political programmes that took the better part of their attention. It took public outcry for them to disentangle from their political engagements to show empathy. It was mainly the governor of Bayelsa State, Senator Douye Diri, that had his trousers folded and his sleeves rolled up as he moved from one community to the other sympathizing with victims. He was himself actually a victim as his country home in Sampou by the bank of the Nun River was completely submerged while his office in the state capital, Yenagoa was partially submerged.

Rivers State governor, Nyesom Wike, who has been embroiled in a political protest following his party's presidential primaries, could not find time to visit the victims in their conditions. He however set up a task force to manage the disaster and released the sum of N1billion to provide for the victims.

Delta State governor, Dr. Ifeanyi Okowa, who is the running mate of the presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, eventually had to cut himself off the campaign train to visit victims, mainly in Asaba, the state capital.

The minister of

Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development, Sadiya Farouq, took smacks from stakeholders in impacted regions after she reduced the impact of the disaster to mere statistics.

In responding to a call by Chief Edwin Clark a leader of the Niger Delta region for the federal government to visit and show concern for the victims in Bayelsa, she had retorted that Bayelsa was not even among the top 10 impacted states. The Pan-Niger Delta Forum (PANDEF) through its national publicity Secretary, Ken Robinson, did not only criticize the minister of Humanitarian Affairs for her 'provocative comment' on the flood situation, it accused President Muhammadu Buhari of abandoning victims of the ravaging floods in the country, especially in the Niger Delta.

Many citizens were surprised that government did not respond well to the alert signals sent by climate and disaster warning agencies early in the year about the impending floods. And worse still, they were shocked that the response was not swift when the flood was still at ankle levels before they began to submerge communities and destroy properties.

The Nigerian Meteorological Institute had in February warned that this year's rainfall could be disastrous and advised governments, communities and emergency agencies to take precautionary measures to prevent the consequences. But the warning did not seem to have meant much to government and stakeholders.

Even though an agency like the National Emergency Management Agency was apprised of the warning, there was little it could do to help. Godwin Tepikor, the South South zonal coordinator of NEMA told *National Point* that Rivers State, for instance, did not have a state emergency management agency and local government management agency to collaborate with NEMA on how to manage outcomes of emergency. Even when Rivers State set up a task force to manage the disaster, Tepikor said the task force did not work with NEMA.

Jude Atupulazi, a journalist, expressed shock over the response of the Federal Government. "This year's flooding has just reportedly rendered about five million people homeless with hundreds dead, yet, the president and commander in chief of the armed forces of the country is yet to be seen at any community ravaged by flood or at any IDP camp. Instead, he's jetted off abroad to "take care of his health," Atupulazi said.

However many individuals, corporate and humanitarian organizations as well as

politicians found time to offer help to the victims. Were it not for them, many of victims would not have survived the trauma. There was this particular young man from Okwuzi community that mobilized assistance from friends and support groups. He would however want to remain anonymous. Among the palliatives he sent to the victims of the flood were 102 10kg bags of rice, four cartons of tomatoes, cash of N840,000 and medical outreach and consumables.

Kebetkatche, a women

support non-governmental organization also went to camps in Ahoada East, Emohua and Ahoada West to reach out to victims in the IDP camps. Their effort to get to the victims in Abua/Odual Local Government was frustrated by the high level of flood, which did not allow for vehicular movement.

With the losses in lives, livelihoods and the economy yet to be compiled, it has become imperative that preparations against future flood disasters and the management of their

consequences ought to start now.

The minister of Water Resources, Suleiman Adamu, attributed this year's flood disaster to heavy rainfall and release of water from the Lagdo Dam in Cameroun. It was reported that when the dam in Cameroon was being built, another dam was to be built downstream in Nigeria to absorb the shock of periodic release of water from the Lagdo Dam. That

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Flooded homes. Credit: Emmanuel Obe



Holding on to a tight rope to cross the high current



A displaced resident carrying his property to cross a neck-deep flood water

Picking The Pieces Of The Flood ...

Cont'd from page 13

did not happen.

Governor Douye Diri of Bayelsa State has lent his voice to the calls for the construction of dams to take in water released from the upstream of the Niger and Benue and even promised looking at the possibility of building one in Bayelsa. Mr. Isaac Saloka, an environmentalist, said those whose homes fall into flood plains should urgently consider relocating to higher grounds. He also called for strict enforcement of town planning codes, to prevent people from blocking natural flood plains and channels.

The Civil Society Organisations advocated that government should not politicize disasters and disaster management, while urgent steps should be taken to set up state and local government management agencies to respond first hand to disaster situations at the subnational levels.

Government should take immediate steps to cleanup environments, which have been destroyed by the flood or polluted by release of crude oil in the flood. It also said government should commence flood livelihood programs.



A family being ferried out of thier flooded homes at Okwuzi. Behind are destroyed plantain trees



Kids playing in an open flooded neighbourhood



Open streets covered by flood at Okwuzi



Submerged houses at Okwuzi



People using canoes to move around flooded neighbourhood



Woman paddling a victim to cross to safety



A school compound flooded in Okwuzi

2022 Flood Leaves More Death, Pain In Onward Journey to Atlantic Ocean



Chief Dumo Lulu-Briggs, governorship candidate of Accord at one of the flooded sites



People wading through a flooded street



Crossing the flood in canoes



Nsesa bridge at Ebocha

The ferocious 2022 Flood water is on its natural southward journey to the Atlantic Ocean. In its wake, it has left death, pain, poverty and starvation from the North East, Middle Belt and the Niger Delta. National Point has visited scores of impacted communities, dislocated persons in Internally displaced persons camps and other places of massive contact by this force of nature and humans. Ibiba DonPedro visited places of impact at Ahoada East Local Government along The East-West Road recently and brought in images and sounds from the catastrophic flood.

By Ibiba DonPedro

The devastation from the 2022 flood on the Ahoada Stretch of the East-West Road is better seen live, than imagined. By Wednesday November 2, 2022, a scene that replicated a clip from a landscape hit by an earthquake was the reality at Ahoada on the road. Clumps of asphalt stripped from the lower layers of the road foundation, were strewn over several kilometres battered by the ravaging currents from the Orashi and other rivers. Lumps of sub-soil are exposed in sorry capitulation to the fury unleashed by the flood waters. On the dry portions of the road a growing number of astonished crowd gathered and ebbed, shock on all faces. A young man had his hands on his head in shock at the carnage.

At a spot on the left side of the expressway, the newly formed river by the road was a

horrid, howling body of swirling water that appeared hungry to consume all in its path.

Among the crowd, *National Point* spoke with a young man, Martin Ibe, who supplies electrical items around the Ahoada expressway axis. 'This flood caused havoc o. Many people died on this road, as most people underestimated the ferociousness of the current. People thought they could just cross to communities on the other side and Mbiama as they did during the 2012 flood. One old woman was swept off as she tried to wade through. We tried to save one woman who had her baby strapped to her back in the last week in October. We finally struggled and saved the Mother, but the baby was swept off her back. Many people died. We tried, but couldn't save some people', he finished in anguished tones.

National Point was informed that those who could swim well and were able to

make brisk business ferrying people across to communities along the stretch, were compelled to devise strategy to save themselves from being dragged to death by the people they assisted to cross, who were drowning. Ikoh Sam informed this publication that those who carried people across used to hold those they led across, by holding their right hand clasped between their left forearms and armpit area. They made sure they were in control as they walked or swam through, so that if the current became too strong and threatened to sweep them all away, they could let go of the hands of the travellers to their fate and save themselves.

More months of anguish await those who use the East-West Road to travel for business and social contacts. The road between Ahoada and Mbiama is completely unusable. Although the Federal government recently announced the sum of

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Oil tanker pushed on its side by the ferocious current at Ahoada



Portion of the East-West road at Ahoada swept away by the raging flood. Credit: Ibiba DonPedro

2022 Flood Leaves More Death, Pain In Onward Journey to Atlantic Ocean

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N506billion for the repair of the East-West Road, the coming months promise to be a nightmare for the users of what is unarguably, the most important road linking the treasure base of the country to the rest of Nigeria.

Responses:

Dortimi T. Kester, A lawyer and development advocate noted of the responses by government warning of more flooding in 2023.

I wonder why the warnings should be directed mainly at the States and LGs. The challenge is obviously beyond mere warnings. After all, we had lived with floods from time and survived their devastations. The problem is not with the people but purely lack of responsive actions by the governments for permanent solutions. All three governments must come together to work this out. It is not rocket science. We can learn from the Netherlands and apply in modified measures their expertise but using the Tennessee Valley Authority model. There are major infrastructure to put in place to control feeder waters to the Niger but especially the Benue.

The NEMA and sister agencies can sound all the warnings for what it is worth, it will go to no issue. If, the appropriate measures are not put in place. For example, warnings do not stop high precipitations or heavy rainfall or the effect of Climate Change. It will not

stop Lagdo Dam or Shiroro or Kainji from opening their sluice gates, nor will warnings develop new rock formations or change the reality of the delta. Nevertheless, State governments on their own, can undertake the construction, build dykes and levees, seawalls and undertake the municipal physical planning including opening canals or constructing lakes and reservoirs to control floods.

Respectfully, I commend the Bayelsa State government for establishing the Directorate for Flood and Erosion Control and hoping it will be allowed to function beyond the usual bureaucratic overbearing and politics. The Directorate must be accorded clear mandates to avoid duplication of roles with the ministries of works, environment and special duties.

Benaebi Oguoko, an environmentalist and development advocate

Dams are meant to regulate flooding not cause more flooding. The problem with Nigeria and its neighbours such as Cameroon is that they do not release the excess build up of water on time.

If released in a timely manner, the released waters would have time to disperse into the tributaries of the Niger and Benue, down to the sea. Furthermore, a series of locks that can divert waters into the smaller rivers and artificial lakes constructed would have to

be built to control downstream flooding.

At the moment, the Federal Government seems not to care, and is only interested in gaining full control of Rivers and waterways for sectional narrow interest groups. So along with the opposition to the Water Resources Bill, Ijaws will have to demand proper management of the upstream dams, name the Kainji, Jebba and others in Nigeria and the Cameroun Dam that is on the Benue.

Poor management and water release activity is causing billions of dollars of damage in the downstream communities. Government inaction can be interpreted as government policy to destroy downstream communities. Since 2012, the Niger and Benue have overflowed regularly because of dam water releases, although historically this has been happening to a lesser extent since the Kainji dam was constructed.

So, the Federal government has no integrated flood management strategy for the communities of the lower river Niger and Benue. This must be brought to the attention of the National Assembly by our representatives.

In the meantime, the Ijaw Nation or Izon-Ibe must come up with an integrated flood management strategy to mitigate the effects of regular dam water releases and protect our communities.



Submerged houses with the Agip oil flow station in the background



Rescued victim of the flood at Ihuike



Temporary camp for children submerged



Kids swimming in flood water after their houses in Okwuzi was submerged



Flooded neighbourhood in ONELGA

Hunger, Anxiety Rules In Rivers IDP Camps

...Victims Call for Urgent Financial Lifeline

By Constance Meju



One of the old women affected by the flood

It has been tales of neglect as hunger, want, anxiety trail internally displaced persons, IDPs, in the camps where they have been forced to by the now receding 2022 flood which has caused so much damage across the country with much heavier impact in the Niger Delta region.

Even though Niemeth warned repeatedly months before the flood came ravaging, the government from federal to states did nothing to try to prepare the people and put up measures to stem the effect when it finally came. The Niger Delta states especially the areas around the bank and tributaries of the Niger are flood plains with reported projections of much of it being submerged by 2030 according to environmental research.

While in 2012 the flood impact was heavy, intervention was somehow coordinated, whereas, the current flood though expected, was without any mitigation plan. Consequently, displaced persons are facing a lot of challenges, high on the list is hunger. While they are cramped in their shelters, there are no mattresses or blankets, no mosquito nets, poor water sources and very little if any healthcare.

Pregnant women are unable to access ante-natal care, nursing mothers are not eating enough to feed their babies and lack essential items while the sick are not accessing healthcare.

In contrast, their Delta State counterparts from investigations, are faring

better with even provision for the children to take lessons while in camp.

National Point visited some IDP camps- Abarikpo Camp and Akoh District Center in Ahoada on October 28 and observed that the IDPs there were facing serious challenges over feeding, sanitation, healthcare and worries over how to cope after the floods.

Chief Napoleon Ordu, Eze Ubio told National Point that the damage in the Ahoada/Omoku axis is colossal.

"Flood is not safe. The whole of Ahoada West is submerged. All the mud houses in Ubio have caved in because of the flood, the farms are flooded; no roof, no food. My people are suffering. Government should come and help us," the traditional ruler said.

The flood took the people unaware. According to many of them, nobody warned them.

Mrs Charity Emmanuel Olimini an IDP from Ubio Community taking shelter at Abarikpo Camp narrated:

"I arrived this center on October 11, 2022. I have not seen much, no better treatment. They brought one bag of beans, two bags of rice, one big bag of garri, five tubers of yam. No soap, no water, no mosquito net. Women spread wrapper on the floor to sleep, including nursing mothers.

"Pregnant women are hungry, have no money and unable to access ante-natal care

"I want government to

help us get out of this. We eat together and sometimes, mothers if they have extra, cook for their kids".

A few cooking pots, none big enough for cooking for a large population were positioned at the entrance of the hall.

According to the IDPs many of their colleagues had gone to attend a burial ceremony and by 5pm they will assemble in the hall, a health center.

"We are suffering. Some mothers use carton as bed for new babies." Ekiye Chika Joe told the visitors that the Ahoada West Local Government chairman has visited twice as at Friday, October 28. He brought to them, five bags of rice, three bags of salt, three bags of 100 kg garri and five bags of sachet water.

The people said they need frequent food supply to be able to eat each day, mattresses, mosquito nets and a standard water supply source,

The Abarikpo Community hosting them has only one functional mono pump making it difficult for all the over 300 IDPs to bathe daily and it shares from relief materials brought to the IDPs.

A worried father recounted that most of the women do not eat as there is not enough to go round.

"They are eating only pepper and salt, no fish.

"We are homeless, don't know how or when we will go back. Our mud houses have fallen and need to be rebuilt before we go back when the water finally goes

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Nursing mothers forced to the floor with their babies. Rejoice Gift and her baby (left)



Hunger, Anxiety Rules In Rivers IDP Camps

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back. Bathing is a problem, government should come to our aid".

An 87 year old man, Pa Robinson Anaw said to have one child, was lying sick on the only mattress in the IDP camp. He asked for attention from the NGO health team busy attending to a long line of the IDPs.

Rejoice Gift, mother of six was with her two month old baby, Anabel. Mother and child had no mattress but were lying on a wrapper spread on the floor looking hungry and helpless.

Before the flood the farm was her source of survival but that farm now lies submerged. Though the baby feeds on the mother's milk, the mother does not have enough food to adequately feed her neither does she have any money to supplement what the camp throws her way.

Another nursing mother, Esther Chigozie, mother of three has a two-month old baby. "Flood has carried all my farms. We need pampers, baby things, mosquito nets. I can't care for my baby," she cried.

Looking towards life after the flood, she said they need money and health facilities. "Government and good people should help us. We need money to build and farm again and also, health facilities".

Obuama Tom from Ebrass Community in Ahoada West Local Government Area was looking lost. He lost four farms and a fish pond to the flood.

"We need money to build block houses-two or three rooms where we can pack in until we rebuild our homes. We have no money to meet up," he lamented.

Before the flood he was off the poverty line feeding his family and meeting their needs including living in a six-room mud house. He would want to get back to his self-reliant level but that can only come if rescue comes his way.

Freedom Sylvanus captures it better. "We need financial assistance. With money we can meet everything".

Christian Ogalanya from Obuama had eight farms and four children. Unfortunately, he did not retrieve anything

from the angry flood. He simply stated, "We need help".

Pregnancy is a difficult state to be caught in under an emergency state. Two pregnant women that this publication spoke to are not finding things easy.

Confidence Blessing is from Ohoda Community, mother of two and seven months pregnant but hunger is a threatening guest. She is also too financially handicapped to access healthcare services. She said she was registered in Oyiba Community Health Center, an impacted community.

Blessing Daniel from Ubio is six months pregnant and has also not been able to access ante-natal care from the camp.

Monday Princwill Evergreen who introduced himself as a representative of the Ekpeye Central Flood Committee at the Akoh District Office Camp explained that the camp, converted from the Federal Road Safety Building is hosting IDPs from Oyigbe,

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Pregnant women with little to eat, Confidence Blessing and Blessing Daniel



Road leading to Abua



A nursing mother receives a pack from Kebetkache



Free health care being accessed

Hunger, Anxiety Rules In Rivers IDP Camps

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Amanikpo, Ebrass, Olokuma, Ubio, Ihuechi, among others. It has about 100 IDPs.

He said relief materials are being distributed from the Central Committee to all camps and individuals.

He noted that the sanitary condition at the camp is not too good but said a medical team is moving from camp to camp.

He said the bulk of relief materials received so far came from Total Energy and Mobil and the Eze Ekpeye Logbo Central Committee.

Monday called on the federal and state government to help the flood victims. And 48 year old Pat Goodluck Ezekiel from Ebriha, Ahoada West, a farmer with six children said the extent of damage is huge.

"The flood damaged farmlands, houses and people are homeless. Many houses are down, people sleep in the market, open places, church fields with mats, under canopies; on concrete; some use plantain leaves as cover. There is hunger, no road", he stated.

Ezekiel wants urgent government intervention. "We want government to visit the villages affected, build us concrete houses even if two-two rooms, assist us with farming implements like cassava stems, plantain suckers etc. after the flood. In the meantime, We also need mattresses, only three were supplied here," he demanded.

Two very old women were spotted

in their midst. One of them was sitting on spread-out sack bags and declared she was sick. She was lucky as the medical team was on hand to attend to them.

Mercy Akuanyoono who also visited some other camps in Ahoada also reported that people were facing serious hunger. According to her, in some places people stay from morning till evening without food.

She said: "Camps visited are Ihuike IDP Camp and Edeoha IDP Camp, all in Ukpata Kingdom in Ahoada East. The Ihuike Camp has displaced persons from Ahoada East and Ahoada West. They had some support at the initial stage but the support is now reduced.

"The identified challenges are: No food- it is insufficient if ever it comes; nursing mothers have sick infants. No baby food for their growing infants. They lack mosquito nets. Windows are open with no nets. The senior citizens are ill.

"There are no mattresses so they lie on the ground. A lot of them have developed cough because of exposure to the cold floor," she reported.

The Kebetkache medical team told National Point that high blood pressure ranging from 150-170 and above was recorded among many of the IDPs who assessed its services, most likely resulting from clear worries over the homelessness, poverty and worries over

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Mud house collapsed by the flood



Delivering rice and noodles to victims of flooding in Asaba



Matresses nad cartons of noodles for flood victims



Relief materials for flood victims



Delivering relief materials at Asaba IDP camp

The ravaging flood and the devastating consequences that visited several communities in different parts of Nigeria has left a bitter taste in the mouth of the victims.

The flood, which has been rated as worse than that of 2012 has brought untold hardship on several citizens of Nigeria, while the government is also perceived to be at its wit end as the enormity of the devastation seems to have overwhelmed the various governments.

Several communities have been submerged, unquantifiable properties destroyed and lives have been lost. Truly, it is an ill wind that blows nobody any good, because at the end of it, not only the immediate victims would suffer the consequences of the flood. It will surely have a spiral effect. Farmlands have been destroyed and this can only translate into scarcity of food in the near future.

Except something meaningful is done, especially encouraging dry season farming, the people would have to contend with severe shortage of food amidst a biting economy that people are presently battling with.

Delta State is one of the worst hit states by the flood as 21 of the 25 Local Government Areas of the state suffered greatly from the ravaging flood while hundreds of thousands have been rendered homeless. Means of livelihood, properties and livestock were completely destroyed.

To manage the situation and bring succour to the flood victims, the Delta State government has set up 11 camps at different locations in the state. Delta State Oil Producing Area Development Commission (DESOPADEC) has also established four camps and together, these camps have over 25,000 persons in the 15 camps.

These camps have offered alternative accommodation to numerous flood victims.

The government has been providing all the day to day needs of the displaced persons while some persons have also provided support to some camps through donations of food, toiletries and finance.

Some well-meaning Nigerians have been supporting the efforts of the government by making donations to the displaced persons.

One of such donors is Pastor Jonathan Ukodhiko who is the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) House of Representatives candidate for Isoko Federal Constituency who made donations to displaced persons in Isoko in Delta State.

Items he donated include, 100 bags of 50kg Rice, 10 cattle, 25 cartons of ice fish, 1484 tubers of yam, 20 cartons of peak Milk sachets and 2000 bags of sachet water.

Other items include 22 gallons of palm oil, 26 cartons of sardine, 250 mosquito nets, 150 cartons of noodles, 66 bags of garri, 250 pieces of mattresses, 250 blankets, 42 bags of

Delta Flood Victims: Their Challenges And Hopes

By Dave Okpogadie, Asaba



Emmanuel Opene



Blessing Ndubuisi



Amaechi Oranyeli



Oneh IDP Camp

beans, 20 cartons of milk tea, 22 bags of salt and 600 loaves of bread.

Ukodhiko said he was moved by the challenges being faced by the Internally Displaced Persons and thanked Dame Okowa, the 05-Initiative and his friends for their partnership.

According to him, "When the ravaging flood menace struck Isoko, some of us responded immediately, though not through donations first, but through immediate assessment of the situation and to ascertain how best to assist the people who are affected."

"Consequently, we visited several IDP camps and also commissioned a team of dedicated young men to move around with boats to the affected communities to enable us have a piece of first-hand information about the needs of our people who are displaced by the devastating flood and how best to help them."

"After careful appraisal of the flood situation and having known the needs of our people who are displaced, I was passionately moved by the desire to assist our people."

"I sincerely appreciate all my friends and associates who heeded this noble call of charity and responded bountifully. May God in his infinite mercy reward them accordingly for donating

toward this charitable gesture passionately without coercion but out of pure love and kindness," he stated.

The items were presented to the IDP camps at Isoko Central School Oleh, Odoro Primary School Oleh, Alaka Grammar School Ozoro and other Isoko communities impacted by the rampaging flood.

The Delta State government has also come out with several plans aimed at ameliorating the pain of the displaced persons.

For effective health care services at the IDP camps, the Delta State Contributory Health Scheme has extended its services to the various camps across the state.

The director general of the scheme, Dr Ben Nkechika who made this known to journalists in Asaba, said the aim was to ensure the health of displaced persons across the state.

He noted that by registering the displaced persons into the scheme, they are now entitled to treatment beyond what the medical facilities at the camp could offer.

He revealed that these persons would not pay any money as the state government would take care of every payment including the premium, adding that the scheme covers the father, mother

and the children.

During the visit of the *National Point* to Oneh camp in Asaba, the Camp Commandant, Eugene Onwenonye spoke on the situation at the camp.

He revealed that things are moving on smoothly at the camp, though it was rough at the initial stage, adding that with the help of the state government and good spirited individuals, the camp was able to take proper shape.

According to the commandant, there are 3,026 Internally Displaced Persons registered in the Oleh Camp.

He revealed that there are five physically challenged persons in the camp while four births and one death had been recorded so far.

The camp commandant used the occasion to appeal to good spirited individuals to come to the aid of the displaced persons, informing that public support has been minimal.

"Apart from the government, we have not recorded much donations. However, we have received from few spirited individuals. We are appealing to individuals to come to the aid of these displaced persons. Government alone cannot do it. People should donate towards making sure that these people are lifted from their current state of mind and what they are experiencing now."

He noted that everybody, including the children are well fed and learning is going on smoothly, adding that the teachers from the flood ravaged communities had been relocated to the camp for effective teaching and learning.

National Point equally spoke to some displaced persons who expressed their pains and expectations from government and well-meaning people.

One of the affected flood victims is Amaechi Oranyeli, a farmer from Oko, a community between Asaba and Onitsha.

According to him, feeding in the camp was okay but he lamented bitterly the loss of everything he had laboured for including his plantain, cassava and yam farms, to the flood.

"I have plantain plantation, yam and cassava farms. All are completely gone with the flood. I have nothing today. I don't even have clothes."

I am a farmer and I intend to go back to farming when the flood recedes."

He appealed for support from government and good spirited individuals so that he can go back to farming after the flood.

Emmanuel Opene, a farmer and OND holder from Oko Polytechnic in Anambra State lamented the loss of everything he has to the flood.

"I have lost my farm and my properties. Apart from these clothes I am putting on, I don't have anything else. Before the flood came, I was planning to go back to school to pursue my HND degree but all my investments have been destroyed by the flood."

"My father who could have helped is a retired headmaster and his gratuity has not been paid by the government. Everything is bad now as there seems to be no hope, he lamented."

Emmanuel, hopes to go back to farming to raise money for his education. He also appealed to the state government and the general public for support to enable him pursue his academic ambition.

Blessing Ndubuisi, a pregnant woman, appealed to the government for support for pregnant women in the camp.

"We pregnant women need baths, mosquito nets and foams because we don't have any of these things again as the flood destroyed everything. The authority should have mercy on us."

She also appealed for government's financial support to rebuild damaged houses as there would be nowhere to return to after the flood.

Madam Blessing, a farmer who cultivates yam, cassava and vegetables, said she lost everything to the flood.

She affirmed that the food in the camp is good and she was full of praises for the camp commandant, Mr. Eugene Onwenonye, who, she said had been a father figure in the camp.

However, she noted with sadness that there were some people in the camp who were not flood victims but have crashed in live in the camp. She frowned at such behaviour and called on the government to scrutinize and screen everybody in the camp before giving financial assistance because the aim of such fake persons is to get financial gain from the government fraudulently.

"Government should watch very well to know people that genuinely need help, especially farmers. There are some people in this camp who are not in anyway victims of the flood. They are just here pretending to be victims so that they can get something from the government. This is very bad," Madam Blessing stated.

Chinaza Eze is a nursing mother from Imo state but resides in Oko. She said she is a trader but the flood has completely destroyed all her wares and other properties. She expressed satisfaction over the life in the camp, adding that learning was going on smoothly in the camp as her children had been attending classes regularly.

She, however, appealed to the state government and well-meaning individuals to come to their aid so that they can go back to their businesses again.

The flood is gradually receding and it is hoped that the victims find needed help to help them continue with their normal life after the flood. ●

Hunger, Anxiety Rules In Rivers IDP Camps

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2022 Floods: Niger Deltans Tackle Humanitarian Minister

By Emmanuel Obe

The Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster and Management and Social Development, Hajjiya Sadiya Farouq has come under fire from the people of the Niger Delta Region for trivializing the flood disaster in Bayelsa State.

The minister, while briefing the press in Abuja on Thursday, dismissed a call by Chief Edwin Clark, a leader of the Ijaw for the federal government to act fast to save the Niger Delta from the flood disaster. She said from the records available to her, Bayelsa was not even among the top 10 impacted states in Nigeria.

Referring to a chart on the number of deaths resulting from the floods, the minister listed Jigawa State as number one because of the death of 91 people in the state and Anambra State as number two with a death toll of 57.

But in several reactions to the claim by the minister, the people of the Niger Delta accused her of being insensitive to the plight of the millions of people who have been trapped in the floods in Bayelsa State.

They said it was rash and insensitive of her to trivialize the suffering of the people, who had lost family members, homes, valuable property, farmlands and livelihoods to the flood disaster, which virtually submerged all the local government areas of Bayelsa State.

They said Bayelsa State was the only state where the flood covered everywhere including Yenagoa, the state capital. They challenged the minister to visit Bayelsa State to see things for herself instead of relying on fake statistics sent to her by armchair officials who had not visited the state.

However, a few commentators blamed the position of the minister on the failure of the people of the state to highlight the situation in Bayelsa State to the world.

Blessing Ironsi Bunas said, "Yes that's because we are only posting and tagging Bayelsans to see. In Lagos when they talk about flood, Kogi is the only place they talk about. It is when I began to show them pictures that they shouted. Let's do more of publicizing it. Information is power. Probably what she was informed is what she spat out. Except she's being heartless, she kuku no visit the state to know the nature of the flood. It is well."

Fidelis Soriwei, publisher of an online publication and former chief press secretary to the Bayelsa State governor, wondered why the minister was introducing discrimination into a humanitarian matter.

Recalling a similar disaster in 2012, Soriwei said, "Dear Minister Sadiya Farouq, President Goodluck Jonathan did not discriminate between states in flood management in 2012. In the flood of October 2012, Bayelsa-born President Goodluck Jonathan ordered the immediate release of N17.6 billion as direct



Submerged street in Okuzi, Egbema ONELGA



Sancta Maria High School, Omoku submerged

financial assistance to the affected states and some Federal Government agencies responsible for disaster management. Funds distribution was: N13.3 billion for states and N4.3 billion for Federal Government agencies.

"He constituted a National Committee on Flood Relief and Rehabilitation to assist the Federal Government to raise funds to respond effectively to the trauma caused by the flood.

"Today Jonathan's state is under water. He paddles a canoe to his residence submerged by flood in Otuoke, Ogbia. He paddles a canoe around his compound!

"Sadly, and most shocking, what the minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development can do is play the putrid ethnic and regional card. This lack of sympathy from this particular ministry is itself a humanitarian disaster!

"The greater part of Yenagoa, the state capital is under water! Dutse, the capital of Jigawa is not under water! Yet her feelings of empathy cannot cross the Niger Bridge at Lokoja. Bayelsa is not Northern Nigeria! Jigawa is the most affected. Bayelsa, a state under water, is not among the 10 most affected. Haba! Minister?"

"The whole of the university town of Amassoma and indeed most communities are still under

water. Yenagoa, the state capital is not better! Roads are cut off. The governor has not called off the holidays foisted on the state by flood waters! IDP camps are flooded.

"Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management, Sadiya Farouq, please, visit Bayelsa. It will definitely change your views anchored on ignorance."

Eric Omare, a former commissioner in Delta State, said, "For the minister of Humanitarian Services not to have visited Bayelsa by now is demonstration of failure."

Joel Bisina, a civil rights activist, also from Delta State said what the minister said was a regular case of insensitivity on the part of public office holders.

Austin Bebara Abay said it was the evidence of the Federal Government's marginalizing of the Ijaw Nation. "They are only interested in oil and gas, nothing else," he said.

Dennis Egbemo said the minister was out of tune with reality. "Her emergence as Humanitarian and Disaster minister has not helped Nigeria in any way. She's antiquated and very timid in judgement. She had always given out dishes of fear when the people needed hope. Now that the worse is happening in Bayelsa, she's not severely affected. What a disaster since becoming minister in her disaster ministry!" Abay said.

Chima Innocent said, "It is quite unfortunate that the crude oil from Bayelsa is used to develop the North. Posterity will not forgive the injustice of the current government of Nigeria."

Victor Epumu said Hajjiya Farouq's speech was demeaning of her high office. "They are more Nigerians than others. And that gave her the impetus to talk like an ordinary citizen other than a leader without reasoning. How many states in Nigeria did she traveled to?"

Justice Uguoji said the minister's reaction was insensitive. "The only takeaway from there is the human callousness against an entity/tribe. Most of the times, the problem is that those in position of authority sit in the comfort of their luxurious offices to imagine."

Peter Guanah said if the woman knew what people were going through and even going through now she wouldn't have said that valuables/ lives are lost. "This nonsense must stop."

Kasanya Awusa said, "Let her not visit so that they don't stone her. Let her stay in her cozy Abuja office and make pronouncements whilst enjoying petrodollars from the bowels of Bayelsa she dehumanizes."

Onoriode Kevin Akpe said, "Ignorance steeped in unbridled arrogance fueled by a highly bigoted mind is all I can describe

the statement by the minister of Humanitarian Affairs... very very sad!"

Meanwhile, a former commissioner for Culture and Ijaw National Affairs, Mr. Austin Dressman, has called on Sadiya Farouq to resign as minister over her pronouncement about Bayelsa not being among the top 10 flood impacted states.

In a reaction he made available to Mangrove Pen, Dressman described the minister as clueless, saying it was shameful that the federal government had not acted to cushion the impact of the flood particularly in Bayelsa State through its agencies.

He said there is glaring evidence that Bayelsa State is the worst hit state by this year's flood given that the state is just by the Atlantic Ocean where the waters released from the Lagdo Dam in Cameroon empties, through the Rivers Benue and Niger.

He averred that Bayelsa is the only state that has been cut off from the rest of the country owing to the destruction of some part of the east-west road by the flood which has made it impossible for travelers to ply the road.

While he stressed that the whole state has been almost submerged, the former commissioner noted that the state in the meantime can only be connected through the waterways and by air, as a result of the flood.

He said, "Glaring evidence that has shown the world where the flood is worst hit in Nigeria, it has been turned to the usual dirty politics of some northerners taking advantage of every situation to speak on behalf of the north by telling blatant lies."

"It is common knowledge that as we speak, Bayelsa State is the only state that you cannot be linked by road to the western flank of Nigeria through Delta State and to the eastern flank of Nigeria through Rivers State."

"This is so because of the devastating flood that has cut off the East-West Road from the Patani axis from the West on two spots and the East on Ukubie and Ahoada axis on 3 spots."

"Almost the entire state of Bayelsa has been under water with all schools closed down over a month ago. As I speak the State can only be connected through the waterways or by air."

"So how does the minister even dare to compare such a badly hit state of Bayelsa to any other state, let alone, Jigawa State of all states?"

"To cut the long story short, the post-flood era can only be imagined in terms of reconstruction efforts which will run into several billions of Naira."

"Yet a clueless minister is opening her mouth to talk or say what she knows nothing about. You'll be shocked that till this moment, no relief material has been sent to Bayelsa State by the Federal Government through its agencies. What a shame! We demand her immediate resignation or sack!"

Governorship Candidates and Their Deputies, Rivers State



*George Dawari Ibietela
Governorship candidate Action Alliance*



*Anoruewhom Tonnie Ihebulach
Deputy Governorship candidate of
Action Alliance*



*Victor Fingesi Tamie
Governorship candidate of Action
Democratic Party*



*Ekiye Belief
Deputy Governorship candidate of
Action Democratic Party*



*Beke Ugochukwu Prince, Governorship
candidate of All Progressives Grand Alliance*



*Jumbo Charles Omuso, Deputy
Governorship candidate of
All Progressives Grand Alliance*



*Leyii Kwane, Governorship
candidate of Zenith Labour Party*

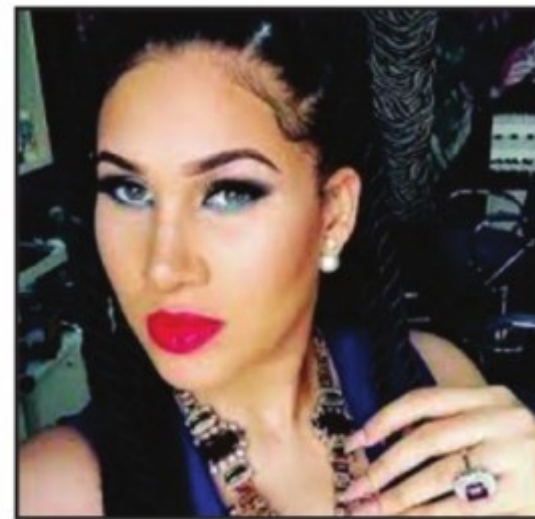


*Mrs. Brassba Jack Dawaye,
Deputy Governorship
candidate of Zenith Labour Party*

Governorship Candidates and Their Deputies, Akwa Ibom State



*Otu Iboro Robert
Governorship candidate of AAC*



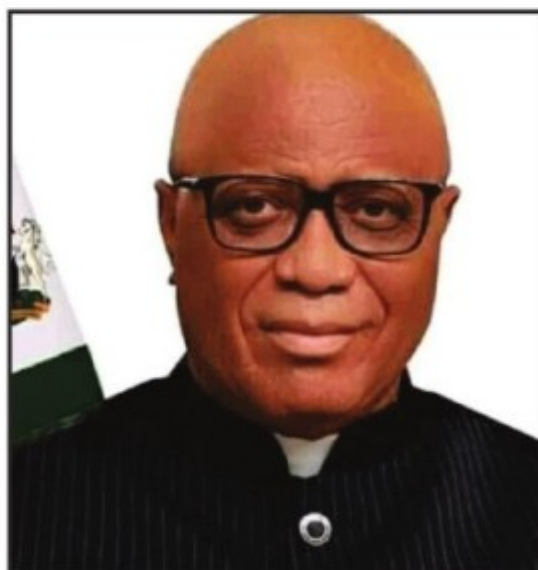
*Hutchings Uduak Caroline
Deputy Governorship candidate of AAC*



*Arc. Nyak-Etok Ezekiel
Governorship candidate of ADC*



*Udomah James UduakAbasi
Deputy Governorship candidate of ADC*



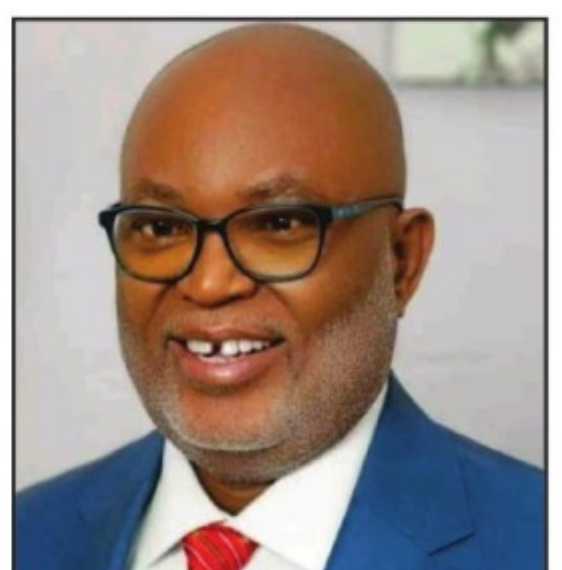
*Eno Umoh Bassey
Governorship candidate PDP*



*Eyakenyi Akon Etim
Deputy Governorship candidate of
PDP*



*Akpanudoedehe John James
Governorship candidate of
NNPP*



*Afangideh Godwin Michael
Deputy Governorship candidate
of NNPP*

2022 Floods: NDDC To Partner NEMA, Others to Reach Victims

Stories by Emmanuel Obe

The Acting Managing Director of the Niger Delta Development Commission, NDDC, Engr. Emmanuel Audu-Ohwavorua has said that the commission would not abandon in their situation victims of the 2022 flood disaster in the Niger Delta region.

Audu-Ohwavorua, who spoke shortly after arriving the NDDC headquarters in Port Harcourt, said the NDDC being an interventionist agency, had a responsibility to cater for the welfare of the people.

"We will address the flood problem in conjunction with other relevant agencies of government such as the National Emergency Management Agency, NEMA.

"The President is concerned and so are all stakeholders. We will intervene to provide the needed succour to ameliorate the sufferings of the people," he said.

The Acting Managing Director also pledged to ensure that the right things were done in the commission while he was there as the chief executive officer.

He told directors of the NDDC that under his leadership, the NDDC will always seek to do the right things. "We will do things right. We will be driven by the progress of the Niger Delta region going forward. We will not support entitlement mentality. It is not just about doing what is good but doing what is right."

He said having been familiar with the system and some management staff, he was coming to work for results that are in the best interest of the region.

Meanwhile, the Minister of Niger Delta Affairs, Obong Umana Okon Umana, has assured flood victims across the Niger Delta that there will be a comprehensive intervention to ameliorate their sufferings.

Speaking during a working tour of one of the devastated areas at Ihuike Community in Ahoada East Local Government Area, Rivers State, Umana expressed shock at the level of devastation, pledging that the Federal Government through the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs and the Niger Delta Development Commission, NDDC will commence remedial action on the road.

The Minister who was accompanied by the Acting Managing Director of the Niger Delta Development Commission, NDDC, Engr. Emmanuel Audu-Ohwavorua, and other Directors of the Commission, described the flood disaster as a national emergency.



The Minister of Niger Delta Affairs, Obong Umana Okon Umana (middle) at Ihuike in Ahoada East LGA (first left) NDDC AG. MD, Emmanuel Audu-Ohwavorua, right, NDDC Director Corporate Affairs, NDDC Dr. Ibitoye Abosede



Obong Umana Okon Umana, Minister of Niger Delta Affairs (Right addressing management and staff at the NDDC headquarters in Port Harcourt. With him is the NDDC Acting Managing Director, Emmanuel Audu-Ohwavorua

Umana said, "I have directed the NDDC to engage SETRACO, the construction company working on the road, to quickly assess the damages at the Ahoada section of the East West Road, so that they can commence remedial repairs to restore the link between Rivers and Bayelsa States."

He said that his Ministry was collaborating with the NDDC, NEMA, and other Federal Government parastatals and state governments to offer medical and infrastructural assistance to impacted communities in the affected states.

Umana expressed sympathy for the thousands of persons displaced by the flood, and the families of those who have lost their loved-ones, noting that urgent measures were being taken by the various organs of government to assist communities in the Niger Delta region by providing relief assistance to displaced persons, as well as rebuild damaged infrastructures across the region.

The Minister pleaded with the people across the region to assist one another to overcome these challenges, stating that he and his staff are working round the clock with other government agencies to

provide relief materials to all affected persons across the region.

The NDDC Acting Managing Director, Audu-Ohwavorua restated the assurances given by the

Minister on addressing the challenges posed by the flood.

"NDDC shall within the coming days, engage and mobilize Setraco Construction Company to the failed and unmotorable sections of the East West Road linking Rivers state and neighbouring states.

Audu-Ohwavorua stated that while the engineers are on site working to repair the road, "the NDDC as an interventionist agency will complement the efforts of both the Federal and State Governments by providing relief materials to those affected by this unfortunate disaster and boats will be provided soon to ease the stress commuters face on a daily basis."

The Minister later visited the NDDC headquarters in Port Harcourt where he held an interactive session with staff at the Commission. He announced that the Federal Executive Council has directed Federal Government agencies to collaborate to provide relief materials for the victims of the flood water as a matter of urgency.

Umana stated: "Some of the impending matters that impeded the performance of the Commission have been dealt with. For those matters, I have presidential approval for the transmission of the 2021/2022 budget of the Commission. I also have presidential approval that recovered funds be released. The President directed that those funds should be used to fund core infrastructural projects in the region.

"I am also happy to state that some of the serious pending issues, like the absence of the NDDC Board has also been addressed and as we speak, Mr. President has transmitted the names of members of the Board to the Senate and I do know that on resumption the Senate would act on it."

Igwe Takes Home Brand New Car As NDDC Talent Hunt Winner

The Acting Managing Director of the Niger Delta Development Commission, NDDC, Engr. Emmanuel Audu-Ohwavorua, has the Commission will continue to support programmes and projects that empower youths of the Niger Delta region.

Speaking when he hosted and formally presented car keys of a 2022 Kia Picanto to the winner of the Niger Delta Talent Hunt, NIDETH, Elvis Uchenna Igwe, Audu-Ohwavorua stated that the Commission will help youths to develop their creative

talents.

"This is part of the capacity building programmes, which the commission does to show case the great creative talents in the region," he said.

Speaking further, he called on the media to publicise projects of the Commission which he noted were mostly in the rural areas, and could be out of the view of the discerning public.

"Most of the things done by the NDDC are not seen because they are in the interior. All we seek is collaboration from all stakeholders," he

noted.

The NDDC Director, Youth and Sports, Mr. Offiong Ephraim, said that the Commission placed premium on regular engagements with youths of the Niger Delta region.

He said, "The Niger Delta Talent Hunt is a youth development programme aimed at harnessing the entertainment potential of the Niger Delta youths. Talented youths from the nine Niger Delta States participated in the auditions, which took place in Edo, Bayelsa and Akwa Ibom states."

Bethsida Celebrates Women's Day



Prophetess Love Apenu



Special guests



Elder Christian Apenu, Prophetess Apenu and Elder Sunny, chairman of the occasion



The unveiling

The Pool of Bethesda Ministry, D-Line Port Harcourt recently celebrated women with a Women's Day.

Founder and senior pastor of the church, Prophetess Love Apenu in her sermon, described women as pillars of both the home and society and admonished women to work hard to keep their homes like the virtuous woman in the bible.

While charging men to love and provide for their wives and families, she urged wives to be careful of the friends they keep and to avoid telling all about their family as that has seen to the break-up and downfall of homes. "Watch your tongue, watch the friends you keep and keep your family secret," she advised.

A play was staged by the women depicting the dangers of not keeping secrets where a young woman brought wrath upon herself and family for failing to keep a secret her grandmother handed to her.

Highpoint of the day was the unveiling of a gift to the church from the women group. Friends from far and near celebrated with the church.

NLNG Sponsored A Bookfest Organized By The Rainbow Book Club Recently In Port Harcourt



The moderator, Karina Igoniko with Su'eddie Vershima Agema (on stage), Sadiqu Dzukogi and Romeo Oriogun (on screen).



Group picture of the author, Agema, Igoniko, others with some secondary school students.

It featured interactions with authors listed for the 2022 NLNG Africa Literature Prize-Su'eddie

Vershima Agema, author of Money and the Call of ..., Sadiqu Dzukogi, author of 'Your Club, My Quibla' and

Romeo Oriogun of 'Normad', all poetry books. Moderator was Karina Igoniko and Agema was physically present while the others participated virtually.

Winner of the book prize was announced on October 14 and the prize money is N100,000.

Literature aims to bring Nigerian authors within and in the Diaspora to public attention and to celebrate literary craftsmanship in the country.

Breakthroughs Chapel Int'l Celebrates 22 Years Anniversary



Bishop King Moses Sogunle ministering

It was tales of gratitude as Bishop Moses Sogunle and members of Breakthroughs Chapel Int'l clocked 22.

Fellow ministers, friends were at the church to join the celebration.



Cross section of members/guests



Special prayer time



Ken and Constance Meju



The Choir ministering



Bishop Sogunle, wife and church member click glasses



Cutting the anniversary cake



A toast to the growth of the church



Ogonda Martins



Bishop Sogunle, wife with guests



With ministers

CODE Hosts Rivers Communities Town Hall Meeting

By Chim Ogwutum

... Amidst pathetic complaints of lack of infrastructural facilities

Touched by the pathetic situation faced by communities in Rivers State as a result of lack of infrastructural facilities and the state of decay in the few existing ones due to neglect and lack of maintenance by the government, an African civil society organization, Connected Development, CODE, has called on the Rivers State Government to see the urgent need to address infrastructural deficit in the state.

This call was made on Thursday, October 27, 2022, during a town hall meeting hosted by the organization for communities in Rivers State at Landmark Hotel in Port Harcourt.

The event, part of "Follow the Money Project", had community development (CDC) chairmen from various communities in Rivers State, such as Oyigbo urban in Oyigbo Local Government, Umuechem, in Etche LGA, Obuama Community in Degema LGA, Bomu in Gokhana LGA, George People Community in Bonny LGA, Odimerenyi Community, Ahoada East LGA, Idama Community in Akuku-Toru LGA, Emohua, Omuku among others.

The event which was transmitted live via NigeriaInfo 92.3fm, saw representatives giving pitiable accounts of their people's challenges, due to infrastructural deficit in their areas with appeals to the Rivers State Government, NDDC, multinational corporations and relevant agencies to consider coming to their aid.

Earlier, in her address, Rivers State Lead of Connected Development (CODE), Ms. Evelyn Williams told participants that the essence of the Community town hall meeting was to look at the research report that was being carried out by Connected Development team in the 23 local government areas of Rivers State, specifically on the state of basic social amenities, on health, education and other sectors.

Ms. Williams said that Connected Development has been able to attract projects not only in the 10 local governments but even in the 23 local governments in the sectors mentioned stating that it is quite disheartening to note that most of these basic infrastructures are in deplorable states.

"So, the purpose of all of these we're doing is to actually work together with communities to effectively engage government commitments to effectively deliver services to citizens that actually elected them into office", she stressed.

Giving situation reports in their various communities, a representative of Oyigbo Urban in Oyigbo Local Government Area, Chief Precious Enweruka said Oyigbo is in dire need of infrastructural development, as internal roads are nothing to write home about.

In spite of that, Chief Enweruka expressed thanks to God that the state governor is taking care of the Oyigbo Round About to Afam roads, adding that they have internal roads that are



Mrs. Evelyn Williams trying to link up with Nigerian info 92.3fm for live broadcast

very much important to their communities, but are dilapidated as the condition of the roads have forced people out of the communities into Oyigbo Urban.

Electricity, he said is another problem being faced, pointing out that for a year and seven months now, some parts of Oyigbo have been thrown into darkness. He also complained about drainage, saying that the entire area is always flooded, hence they have roads that can channel water into Imo River if Oyigbo Urban is properly looked into and made a focus of development.

Chief Enweruka noted that the area's geo- strategic position coupled with their peaceful nature should make the state government, NDDC, oil companies and even the local government, come to their aid and do something.

"People are leaving the place because of absence of electricity and bad roads", he added.

Nwairoegbu Godspower, the CDC chairman of Umuechem Community in Etche Local Government Area of Rivers State, expressed happiness for being at the event, lamenting that it was shocking to note that Umuechem Community has been yearning for development since oil was found in that community in 1957. He said it is on the record that Umuechem was the first community where oil was found in large quantity after Oloibiri in the present Bayelsa State, making the community the second in the country but it lies undeveloped.

"In 1990, we asked for social amenities-just simple light, water, and the government said no; that we have no right to what belonged to us. We were killed, maimed, and our houses destroyed, we have been suffering since that time till date. And as I speak, Umuechem Community does not have an ordinary health centre facility.

"We have approached the government, we have approached the OMPADEC, now NDDC, and up till date, even when they tried putting up a structure called a hospital, up till date the cottage hospital is not functioning, the building is dilapidating, as every efforts made by the community to see even if they can provide ordinary health centre to our community is proven abortive.

"It is worthy to note that

Umuechem Community contributes immensely to the resources of Etche Local Government and nothing is happening. Up to date, there is no state government project sited in Umuechem", Godspower stated.

According to him, every project you see in Umuechem Community, is through community efforts.

"We need the state government, the federal government and the local government, and even the Angels to help us develop our area, as people are crying upon the huge natural resources that we have", he appealed.

Dr. Obuah Anthony, CDC chairman of Akpabu in Emohua Local Government Area, explained that the people have some challenges in their community as far as social infrastructure is concerned.

Beginning from the area of education, Dr. Anthony said their primary school building is dilapidated and the roofs have been pulled off by wind, making the roofs to be open such that each time it rains the whole class rooms and halls are flooded, children are stranded and learning cannot go on effectively.

Dr. Anthony called on the government to respond to the needs of his community by stepping in to fix the school building before it will finally collapse.

He added that the community health centre does not have a resident doctor and there are no drugs for patients a situation he said is a challenge because many have lost their lives. He also mentioned water as a major problem in the community right from the creation of Rivers State, as the community has been having their main source of water through the Sombriero River, saying that the rivers are polluted as certain sicknesses and diseases from the rivers affect members of the community seriously.

"They suffer from cholera, dhiareaah, dysentery and other water borne diseases. We need government's urgent attention to establish a rural water scheme in this community.

"Our roads are failing in some sections, and to access the community, we pass through some difficulties", he added.



CODE Rivers State lead, Ms. Evelyn Williams in red dress (7th left), in group photograph with representatives of various communities, and the media, after the town hall meeting

Mr. Odile Godstime, is the CDC chairman of Odimerenyi Community in Ahoada East Local Government Area, who said it was a pleasure to hold the session.

Mr. Godstime recalled that the state school Odimerenyi was built in the early 1960s, and from time to time, the community organizes its rehabilitation, noting that as it stands now, the school is completely dilapidated, and the roofs are off.

He recalled that during Chibuike Amaechi's era, the community had a model primary school but it was not completed and so could not be used. According to him, even in the one they have, the pupils are suffering and they sit down on the bare floor to learn. When there is rain, the rain beats them directly because the roofs are open.

"The only source of water we had in my area was through NDDC, and after some time the water became bad and the system collapsed". He said the community called on NDDC to come to their aid.

"The health centre constructed by Stephen Ihua as the Local Government chairman was not completed, and today we are calling on the current Ahoada East Local Government to come to our aid and complete the health centre because we know the usefulness of health facility to human existence.

"So, we are calling on the government, NDDC, multinationals and other relevant agencies to come to our aid and assist the community and carry out these project", he pleaded.

In his presentation, a representative of Bomu Community in Gokhana Local Government Area, Chief Isaiah Menekpe lamented the total neglect of his community by the government and other relevant agencies. Chief Menekpe said primary and secondary schools in his area are in deplorable condition with leaking roofs, no water and toilet facilities, as pupils and students defecate in the bush thereby exposing themselves to the dangers of reptiles.

He further stated that lack of roads hamper transportation of farm produce and result in the perishing of lots of goods. This, he said puts farmers at a very big loss, and appealed to the

government to help them out by fixing some infrastructures for them.

Meanwhile, representatives of other communities from Idama in Akuku-Toru LGA, Finnima Community in Bonny LGA, and Degeman LGA and others, lamented bitterly, the appalling complete infrastructural decay in their areas and appealed to the Rivers State Government, NDDC, multinationals and local governments to come to their aid so as to save the lives of the rural people.

After the community testimonies, CODE, through its Rivers State Lead, Ms Evelyn Williams urged the Rivers State Government to address the lack of infrastructural development in the communities to mitigate the suffering of the people.

The organization noted that majority of the Primary Healthcare Centers (PHCs) lack potable water, an overwhelming majority (83 per cent) of the PHCs are disconnected or unconnected from the power supply, and that a significant proportion of the PHCs across the local government areas lack proper waste disposal points.

"The fact that large populations of the grassroots depend on these facilities without adequate environmental assets highlights the urgent need for intervention", she noted, stressing that schools are unable to meet the requirements and standards of education in the 21st century which breaches the human rights of the citizens of Rivers State by purposefully or unintentionally preventing them from receiving basic education.

Furthermore, she noted, ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) are underfunded, which restricts their capacity to execute and complete initiatives that benefit rural areas.

According to her, citizens should benefit from strategic infrastructure investments to compensate for the overt and covert effects of oil exploration since they suffer the brunt of oil extraction, loss of variety and other natural productive assets.

Ms Williams thank all for honouring the CODE invitation and assured that the organization will continue to do her best, and ensure that government live up to their responsibility by providing the necessary infrastructural facilities for the communities.

New Rivers Police Commissioner Visits Wike

...AS Governor Promises To Build Police Station Near His Private Residence

Stories by Emmanuel Obe

Rivers State Governor, Chief Nyesom Ezenwo Wike has urged personnel of the various security agencies to stop taking sides with politicians who use primordial tactics including religion to frustrate efforts at protecting life and property.

Wike said politicians who deploy religion as a campaign tool could destroy the country as it moved closer to general elections next year.

The governor spoke when the new Rivers State Commissioner of Police, Mr. Okon Effiong, visited him at Government House, Port Harcourt on Thursday.

He said, "We believe we owe this country and we must also stop this politics of religion so that we don't instigate crisis and violence. You must go and tell the people what you can do, what we can offer."

The governor emphasised that his administration has remained committed to the protection of life and property of all residents in the State.

This is because of its belief that the people for which any development projects are provided must feel safe and alive to use them.



Gov. Wike presenting souvenir to the new CP, Mr. Okon Effiong

He said, "For me, there cannot be any good governance without the protection of life and property. Nobody can talk about good governance when there is insecurity everywhere. If you cannot protect your citizens, you have no need to talk about governance."

"Because if you're doing roads, people must be alive to use the road. If you're building good school, people must be alive to go to school. So, it is key that you owe your citizens protection of their lives and property. And so, for us as a government, that is the

sole aim of being in government."

He assured that since the security agencies are the institutions saddled with such

duties, his administration has always and will continue to provide requisite support to them so that they can discharge their security operations effectively.

Governor Wike expressed the hope that the new Commissioner of Police will bring his experience to bear in Rivers State and not be intimidated.

The Rivers State governor praised the immediate past Commissioner of Police, Mr. Friday Ebuka, for staying true to his professional calling.

Wike informed, the State government will build a befitting police station along Ada George Road in Port Harcourt, near his private residence.

The governor said if the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) refused to be influenced, the police stayed

away from interfering in the electoral process and the judiciary insisted that the rules are complied with, the vote of the peoples would count.

The police commissioner, Mr. Okon Effiong, who is the 43rd Commissioner of Police to Rivers State said he have zero tolerance of crime and criminality.

He said, "We have arrested in the past four days more than 12 armed robbers and kidnappers. In the past four days we have rescued more than 12 kidnap victims. In the past four days we have recovered more than six vehicles."

"In the past four days we have recovered arms and ammunition. The law will take its course. We want to stress that we have zero tolerance for crime and criminality." •

Wike Inaugurates 100,000 SAs On Political Units

Rivers State Governor, Chief Nyesom Wike, has formally inaugurated the first batch of 100,000 Special Assistants to the Governor on Political Unit affairs.

At the inauguration, which took place at Adokiye Amiesimaka Stadium, Omagwa on Thursday, Governor Wike told them to work among their people and sample the people's views about his administration.

According to the governor, as special assistants, they were to collate those impressions and pass them on as feedback through the 319 Ward and 32 Constituency Liaison Officers recently appointed, who will eventually transmit them to his office.

He said, "Your own is the most important because it is you that hear directly from the people. It is you that know the feelings of the people about us. It is you that will come and tell us, look, this is what my people are saying."

"This is a political period, hear from the people. What are they saying? So, you'll be able to advise the governor, so I will know what decision to take. It is you who will determine what decision the people of Rivers State will take at the end of the day," the governor said. •

Breast, Cervical Cancers, Number One Killers Of Women – Expert

Prof. Rosemary Ogu, a Consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist at the University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital, UPTH, has said that breast and cervical cancers are the number one killers of women worldwide.

Prof. Ogu, who disclosed this at a one-day Breast Cancer sensitization programme at the Niger Delta Develta Commission, NDDC, headquarters in Port Harcourt, emphasized that lifestyle modification is the best way of preventing breast cancer.

"One out of eight women will have breast cancer in their lifetime. On the average, every two minutes, one woman is diagnosed with breast cancer. Around the world, one woman dies of breast cancer every 13 minutes. Forty Nigerian women die daily from breast cancer," she said.

"Everyone is involved in the awareness and prevention campaign because breast cancer occurs in both male and female genders. Regular personal checks are the key for prevention of breast cancer."

She advised NDDC staff to become intentional about following a reduced fat and carbohydrate diet, adding that people should avoid sedentary lifestyle and reduce alcohol intake.

The Acting Managing

Director of NDDC, Engr. Emmanuel Audu-Ohwayborua, stressed the need to create awareness to help in the prevention and early detection of breast cancer in the country, especially for men and women in the workplace.

He said that the Commission organises Workplace Wellness Programmes every year to ensure

people paid attention to their health.

The NDDC boss, who was represented by a Director in Health and Social Services Directorate, Dr. George Uzonwanne, urged the staff to imbibe healthy personal habits to reduce the risk of Breast Cancer in the country.

He cautioned against

unhealthy habits which increase the risk of breast cancer and encouraged staff of the Commission to eat organic food as much as possible, as well as exercise regularly.

He advised women who are 40 years old and above to go for breast cancer screening at designated wellness centers periodically.

SSA Demands Apology From Minister Over...

Cont'd from page 3

threatening an imminent famine in the foreseeable future.

Thousands of homes, houses, farms, poultries, are still unaccounted for as access to these facilities to know the extent and level of damages done have been a daunting task as the floods have hindered data analysts and humanitarian volunteers and workers to access interior areas of the state, and so, one wonders where the Minister got her data from to warrant her positioning Bayelsa State out of the worst impacted state of the 2022 floods?

We therefore call on the federal government through the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development, Hajia Sadiya Farouq to withdraw her

provocative statement that Bayelsa is not among the ten worst hit state by the flood and for her to tender an unreserved apology to the people and victims of the flood in Bayelsa State for her error of judgement is questionable and frivolous.

While we shall hate to adduce any ethnic colourations in her statement, we wish to state categorically that Bayelsa State as the goose that lays the golden egg for Nigeria's economic main stay of oil and gas, has been the worse hit as this is the only state where all her economic livelihood, health facilities, social infrastructure, have been destroyed by the floods in aLL Local Government Areas without exception; and we are yet to get any federal government assistance in spite of Mr

President's assurances to alleviate the plight of flood victims.

NEMA data stating otherwise are but a sham and should be revisited same way they corrected the earlier record that accorded only 3 LGAs impacted by the floods but have later rectified it to include all eight LGAs in Bayelsa State as fully impacted areas.

The Minister cannot rely on number of LGAs affected or use landmass as yard stick to determine extent of impact without taking into cognisance the total number of LGAs in a state before making such hasty conclusions.

While Jigawa has more LgAs than Bayelsa with over half of the state impacted by the flood, Bayelsa has ALL are LGAs impacted with over 90% of the state submerged and her

economic and health main stay totally threatened while these so called top ten states had less percentage affected and have other options and trade routes to make do with during the floods.

For the records, Bayelsa has recorded more houses submerged to roof tops, FDPs, damages, injuries, losses, and even over a hundred deaths from the flood than any other state in Nigeria due to this year's flooding.

The time to act is NOW!

Signed:

Comrade Tamarakuro Oweifie Senior Special Assistant (SSA) to the Bayelsa State Governor on Media

Money Wife In Becheve Village In Cross River State

The stories below paint these unfortunate pictures better.

There's a barbaric tradition known as "Money wife" in a remote village in Cross river state called Becheve, where girls as young as 10 years old are being sold into marriage

I decided to travel down to learn more about how these girls are being robbed of their childhood. It all started back in March this year, when a cinematographer sent a video to me on twitter, which properly detailed the stories of some of the victims of this barbaric act, and asked that we considered it as our next project for @chessinlums

The video broke me. I spent the next few days doing extensive research on the "Money Wife" practice in Becheve and I was utterly shocked and enraged by some of the discoveries I made. It was the first time I had ever heard of such practice in Nigeria. I knew we needed to do things differently if we were ever gonna have a chance at fundamentally solving this problem and saving these girls.

I told the team @chessinlums about it and we started working on staging an intervention.

Let me delve into some of the things we learned: The Becheve tribe of Obanliku LGA in Cross river state is made up of 17 villages, all of which practice the 'Money wife' tradition. It's located just beyond the famous Obudu hills with a population of about 100,000 people. The 'money wife' is a custom in which a girl child in the community is sold out to a man by her parents as a wife, in exchange for money as little as 5,000 naira (\$10), Food items, or to pay a debt. How it really works is that a "rich" man in the village is approached for a loan that is to be repaid by handing over a daughter to him. In the case of the unavailability of a daughter, the lender waits till they have one.

So most debts are incurred before the girl child is born. This practice ensures that once a girl becomes a money wife, she is considered dead by her family and must not return irrespective of how she is treated by her husband or his relatives.

It gets worse... Upon the death of the man (In most cases, the girls are married off to old men in their 60-90s), the girl is given to his next-of-kin as a wife.

If the money wife dies without having a child, her parents are obligated by tradition to give another girl child as replacement. The girl is surrendered to the lender, as a wife to use as he pleases. The girl will have no rights and her opinion is not sought in the matter, as she is practically enslaved and put to work on farms which they cultivate for their husbands.

She is not allowed to get an education. The men in Becheve cherish this practice as a status

Tuesday October 11 was the International Day of the Girlchild set aside by the UN for attention on the girlchild. It aims to empower girls and amplify their voices. For most Nigerian girls, rather than getting better, things are getting worse. With Nigeria as the global headquarter of poverty, the little gains made in pushing her up are being lost daily. As families lose economic grip, the victims are girls now being placed as collateral for loans or married off at tender ages to keep their families afloat. This is a developing danger that needs to be quickly addressed, as we urge governments to wake up to their responsibilities.



Displaced children at Akoh District Office IDP Camp, Ahoada, Rivers State. Offer the boy and girl equal opportunities in life. It is a right

symbol as it earns them acclaim amongst their peers.

For the innocent girls, their entire childhood is stolen from them and their existence reduced to being mere sex slaves. The physical and psychological trauma that these girls have to face is something we can never fully understand.

We have failed these girls as a society. We are far too disconnected from the realities of children in places like this. Yes, all of this is happening in 2022.

Now, a few organizations, NGOs and civil societies in the past have tried to advocate for these girls, there was even a BBC documentary sometime in 2018 spotlighting this barbaric act of child abuse, but sadly very little has changed. The money wife practice in Becheve is a cultural issue that is so deeply ingrained in poverty and can only be challenged from within the system. Outsiders attempt to intervene, but are hindered by a cultural ideology.

I spent months obsessing about what we could do differently. Ending child marriage in communities like this is a very delicate subject that could worsen the experience of the victims if you sell them false hope of saving them without considering a Holistic approach to intervening. When the hashtags fizzle out and the outrage dies down, the girls are still left by themselves with their abusive husbands, who may even

become more violent to them for being rebellious.

Having good intentions is not enough, it might even reinforce the status quo. After several months of putting a plan together with the @chessinlums team, I was finally convinced that we had a chance at saving these girls.

Four days ago, I finally booked a flight to Cross River State for the first time in my life to assess the situation on ground. Actually, we had to fly to Enugu first and make the rest of the trip by road as Becheve is an 8 hour drive from the airport in Calabar- the capital of Cross River State. That was too much time on the road with the insecurity issues in the country.

It took us 4 hours from Enugu. We had established contact with a Man called Pastor Richard- a missionary who has lived in Becheve for over 30 years. He was the one that first brought the world's attention to this and has continued to fight against this tradition till date.

He has rescued over 50 girls. Hero. We got to the Obanliku local government around 8pm and lodged in a nearby hotel. We had scheduled a meeting with some of the community clan heads the next day to speak to them about our plans for their people. We set out by 8am the next day to the residence of the paramount ruler of the community to seek his blessing and permission.

One interesting sight that struck me was this public prison system to shame petty thieves and criminals in the village. After a long drive to the paramount ruler's home, we finally met him and told him of our plans for the community and asked for his blessing. He welcomed us very warmly and offered us kolanut as a sign of peace and acceptance.

We also offered gifts and took pictures with him. Our next drive was to the Utanga village to meet with the Clan heads and village chiefs. This was going to be a lot trickier, as we were faced with a dilemma to either be diplomatic with our approach or just come straight with our intention for the girls. Pastor Richard suggested that we maintain a diplomatic approach to engaging the clan heads, as talking about the money wife practice could make them apprehensive and deny us access to their people. The meeting with the Clan heads was very tense at the beginning but, something very interesting happened as the conversation progressed. When we mentioned that the chess project was to be just for the young girls, one of the elders immediately asked us if it was for the money wives I said 'Yes'.

Deep down, I knew we couldn't really achieve anything without the full cooperation of the community leaders.

There was deafening silence for a moment. The man sighed and said he had suspected that

was our intention. To our surprise, all the village chiefs and clan heads committed to giving us all the support we needed to abolish the practice in the village. The chiefs started narrating how their mothers were also victims of this age long tradition and how it was no longer a thing of pride but a necessity borne out of extreme poverty where the families are left with no choice but, to sell their daughters.

They wanted it to stop too. I couldn't believe my ears. Everything felt like a Nollywood movie dated back in the 60s.

The chiefs gave us their blessing and we took pictures.

Pastor Richard mentioned that in all his years of being in the village, he had never seen the chiefs be so vulnerable and open minded. Our next stop was the Ugbakoko village where we had to walk several miles to meet with another community leader, who was very influential amongst his people. We got his blessing and he gave us permission to use the town hall for our training session with the girls. Finally, we met the girls.

The stories were horrible. Just horrible. Girls as young as 5-15 years old were already married or sold to men old enough to be their grandfathers.

There were a lot of 14-18 year old girls who had kids already.

You can't make this up. Everything I had read about was real.

I met Faith, now a 20 year old girl with 3 children. Abandoned by her husband and now left to fend for herself and children.

All she ever wanted was to go to school and become a nurse. I met Dorathy who was now 27 years old with 6 children and a life filled with pain and extreme suffering. She had her first child at the age of 13.

She told me she had contemplated committing suicide a few times but, needed to stay alive to take care of her children. I met Goodness who was just 9 years old but could read and speak English fluently. She had to drop out of school recently and had been sold as a money wife to an old man from a Neighboring village. It is only a matter of time before he comes to claim his "property" I met all the other girls who have been sold as money wives by their parents, dropped out of school and we're waiting in agony for the "husband" to come claim them.

They knew the names of their husbands already. Many of the girls had tried to runaway but mentioned that there was a charm called "Olembe" that is used to kill or harm any money wife that tries to escape the marriage. A lot of girls have lost their lives during childbirth and many currently live with obstetric and vesicovaginal fistula.

This was a true humanitarian crisis.

An entire community blinded by ignorance into sheep mentality of even condoning the

Edo Nigeria Immigration Service To Increase Awareness Against Illegal Smuggling

Stories by Iduozee Efe Paul, Benin

The assistant superintendent of the Nigeria Immigration Service, Danladi Wosha, has disclosed that 90 per cent Nigerians deported from aboard are from Edo State. Based on this, he promised that the NIS will intensify awareness and sensitization to various communities to educate the grassroots people about the dangers of illegal smuggling and migration.

Wosha who made the disclosures at a sensitization programme organized in Benin City by the Nigeria Immigration Service with the theme: "No Japa Enter Smuggler Hand: Shine Your Eye," said the end purpose of smuggling is for financial and material gains.

He stated that smuggling of migrants comes with the consent of the migrants, unlike the human trafficking where the traffickers are usually the people looking for victims to be trafficked aboard.

He added that smuggling of victims is often carried out by transnationals, while human trafficking occurs both locally and internationally.

Delivering a lecture on, "Understanding the SOP on SOM," Danladi Wosha, said smuggling is a crime against the state. He explained that smugglers benefit more in the business because of the high fees they charge and other material gains they get from the victims.

He said smuggling of migrants is an organized crime against the authority noting that other participants in the crime are the coordinators/organizers, the informants and spotters, safe home operators, guides of victims, the transporters and unauthorized passport producers.

In his welcome address, the controller of Immigration Service, Edo State Command, CIS, Rabi Garp, said the



Participant at the sensitization

sensitization was timely as information dissemination has become the better and most viable tool to help stem the ugly

menace of Smuggling of Migrants (SOMs).

He stressed that facts are power which, the programme is

intended to achieve.

"I welcome you all to this sensitization/enlightenment programme on Smuggling of Migrants (SOM), for Nigeria Immigration Service Officers, Border Management Agencies and the general public in collaboration with the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD).

"This forum is therefore designed to sensitize, enlighten and educate the public on the dangers associated with Smuggling of Migrants (SOM) that is gaining prominence in recent times. This has to stop".

In his goodwill message, the commander, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), Edo State, Dan Oko, said the security agency is ready to partner and collaborate with the NIS to ensure smuggling of migrants is critically reduced in the state and Nigeria in general.

Dan Oko further stated that he had gained knowledge on how smugglers deceive their victims by collecting money from them and selling them to other smugglers for profit purpose, the agency urged all the participants to go to their various homes, communities and villages and spread the information to those who did not attend stressing that, many people are suffering today as a result of lack of knowledge.

Also, the Head of Service (HoS) in Oredo Local Government Area, Comrade Kensington Osifo, said the council is ready to work with the NIS and related agencies to fight against illegal smuggling in the state. He thanked the NIS and the Edo State government for establishing the Edo State Task Force headed by Prof. Yinka Omorogbe, former state commissioner for Justice and Attorney General.

The assistant controller general coordinating Zone G, Dominic Obeta Asogwu, while giving the closing remark, appealed to all the participants to take the message to the grassroots. He said, the vulnerable people who need the information are living in their various communities, and urged everybody to spread the facts in their localities.

ACG Obeta Asogwu also said more than 90 per cent of the victims illegally smuggled out of the country, are from Edo State. He stressed that the fight against illegal migration or smuggling requires a continuous collective process to end the problem. He narrated that when he was in charge at Seme Border, he observed that the majority of the migrant victims from other nations were mainly from Edo State.

He thanked the Edo State government for its efforts to set up an agency saddled with the duty to rehabilitate and reintegrate the migrant victims back to the society through training and capacity building for them to become self-reliant.

Some migrant victims narrated their ordeals during their journey through desert land to Europe and other countries.

NAPPS Wants Obaseki To Review His Education Policy

...Insists Primary Six, JSS 3 Exams Should Not Hold 2nd Term

The National Association of Proprietors of Private Schools (NAPPS), Edo State chapter has frowned at some of the policies enacted by the Obaseki-led government arguing the policies would make students to be idle and redundant at home.

They are also pleading with the governor, Godwin Obaseki not to allow primary six and the Junior Secondary School examinations to be written in March, the second term in the school calendar, stressing that it would make the students to stay long at home thereby make some lazy and likely to resort to various types of negative social vices.

NAPPS at an enlarged meeting held in Benin City, the state capital with chairmen and proprietors and proprietresses of various NAPPS chapters in the 18 local government areas issued the statements in a resolution agreed upon after brainstorming on what it termed some grey areas on government policies on private schools in Edo State.

In the resolution, the body threatened not to enroll their students for the primary six and junior secondary school examinations if the Edo State Government refuses to address the issue of making students write the examinations during the second term in March to resume in September, which they said is uncomfortable to private schools owners.

The body equally appealed to the state government through the ministry of Education to handle the issuance of identity cards and biometrics for every private school student in the state.

They explained that the state government had said in one of the forums that in order to curtail the insecurity in the state, it is pertinent for government to

conduct a biometrics of every citizen in Edo state and urged that rather than entrusting that duty in relation to private schools to the education ministry, that task should be handled by the state government to avoid duplication of facts.

"This is a general State meeting, we came to refuse some policies on the ongoing government educational reforms. It is good, but there are some areas that we feel like appealing to the state government to look into critically and make some adjustments, so that it should not be we are changing what is good for the bad.

"Number one area is the area of Primary Six and J. S. S. 3 Exams. In as much as these exams will take place, there is no need of holding second term exams in March. Instead, we are appealing because students are ours, what would they be doing in the third term? You have no moral justification to tell students who have finished their final exams to still be coming to school and their third term is part of their classes. We are appealing to the state government, through the Ministry of Education, to look at it critically.

"Then another one is the issue of biometrics and ID Cards to be produced for all the students in the state, ranging from KG to Senior Secondary Three, SS3. The state governor His Excellency, Godwin Obaseki told Edo State people recently that the state government is trying to issue identity cards to all citizens in the state.

"So we feel the Ministry of Education should allow the state government's own take preeminence, rather than for the Ministry of Education to produce the ID cards to avoid duplications of ID cards. This and others we beg the ministry and the state

government to allow them to go and have readjustments.

"We appreciate the Edo State government reforms in all areas of education but, we as NAPPS in the state, are appealing for some adjustments in the policies that the government introduced in school reforms in Edo state. This harmonization of the school calendar, the timing for primary six and JSS3 exams, which the Edo state government said should be written in the second term, in March, will not work well.

"We are appealing that the exams should be written in third term, after Mid-Term Break. This will now enable students have full academic benefits. Because if the students write the exams in second term, what would now happen to the whole of second term? Although, Edo state government said, the students will still be coming to schools after they write the exams in second term, you and I know that the students will not be coming to school if they finish writing their exams," Comrade Ikponmwen stated.

Responding to a recent comment made by the Education commissioner, Comrade Reuben Ikponmwen stated, "The Commissioner of Education, Dr Joan Osa Oviawe said, low income private schools who have not met government requirements approval registration, have no government recognition so government wants to give those schools examination centers for the year. It is not done and it is illegal in law.

"Our stand is that if government does not give unapproved schools exam centers to use and the Ministry of Education is concerned about the students in those schools, they should be taken to government

schools to write their exams. If the government said they don't want these unapproved schools to write exams in approved private schools, the students should be taken to public schools to write the exams."

Comrade Lucky Adeyan one of the NAPPS executive members in Egor Local Government Area said it is wrong for students to remain at home for six months after writing their examination.

He said: "It is wrong for a students to be at home in six months. We know what COVID-19 did in this country and the world at large where, when the students resumed school, it looked as if they have not learnt anything.

"So allowing such students to spend six months at home before resumption date will be too bad and dangerous for the parents and students. We appeal to the state government to make it normal or make an adjustment after mid-term break."

Also speaking, NAPPS representative in Oredo Local Government Area, Comrade Kelvin Egboigbe, said there should be a written document in form of an MoU, between the Commissioner of Education and NAPPS to know if it requires payment of funds by private school owners before students from private schools will be allowed to be captured for the ID cards and biometrics.

NAPPS chairman in Ujunwode Local Government Area, Comrade Daniel Utemeh, said the Edo state government has good plans for enhancing education in the state following the stakeholders in education forum held with the government recently and advised that government should be civil and sincere in its approach.

Justice Depre Tasks Rivers Lawyers On ICT

A prominent judge in Rivers State, Hon. Justice Boma Depre, has called on lawyers to embrace information and communication technology as the world becomes more and more digital.

Justice Depre, who was the Chairman of the Two-Day Colloquium organized by the Rivers State Judiciary has organized under the theme: The Colloquium On the Draft Rules Of the High Court of Rivers State, said due to globalization and information revolution, there was the need for both senior and junior lawyers to embrace ICT. The colloquium took place at the Chief Judge's Ceremony Court, Port Harcourt.

"The social media or the internet has turned the world to a global village, it has become

Stories by Smart Azubike

increasingly impossible for anybody to operate," Hon. Justice Depre said.

The chairman explained that the last time the authority of the state judiciary and legal minds carried out and treated and examined the pros and cons of rules of the High court of the state was in 2010, pointing out that part of the reasons why lawyers are not going for regular ICT is because they are very busy.

"People are afraid of change and innovation. However, the lawyers in the state are so busy that they don't go for ICT training."

Hon. Justice Depre reassured that if members of the Bench and the Bar work together they would achieve goals and

results.

"If all of us work together we will achieve results for a better Rivers State Judiciary Hon. Justice Depre emphasized.

In his remarks, the Chief Judge of Rivers State Hon. Justice Simeon Amadi, said that the problem was not with rules of the state high court judiciary but with lawyers themselves.

"The problem is not with the rules of the state high court but us the senior lawyers. Senior lawyers please try to come for your pretrial conference" Hon. Justice Amadi pleaded.

Our correspondent reports that many senior and junior lawyers from both the Bench and the Bar attended the event, including Okey Wali S.A.N and O.C.J Okocha S.A.N. ●

Eleme Lawyers Forum Chair Lauds Wike For Women's Inheritance Law

By Smart Azubike

As many states across Nigeria continue to discriminate against women on the issue of inheritance rights, the chairman of Eleme Lawyers Forum Mr. Godspower Godfrey has commended Governor Ezenwo Nyesom Wike for signing the Rivers State Women's Inheritance Bill into Law.

Godfrey, who is the principal partner of Powers and Partners (Ajuri Chambers) made this commendation in a chat with *National Point* correspondent in his office in Port Harcourt.

According to him, I want to commend Governor Nyesom Wike for signing the Rivers State Women's Inheritance Bill into law. This is because the women's inheritance right is the trend in the judiciary. And the Supreme Court is also working towards the growth of women's inheritance rights.

He stated that the Women's Inheritance Right Act of Rivers State would open up a lot of doors and windows of opportunities for women, particularly in the area of acquisition of assets and landed property.

He described the law as an

organic element which can receive both input and output through amendments, adding that there was nothing wrong for a woman (married woman) to inherit property from her procreated and oriented family to and her matrimonial family.

"Today, we have prodigal sons but we don't have prodigal daughters. Therefore there is nothing wrong for a married woman to inherit property from both sides of her families. In fact, at the moment the Supreme Court of Nigeria has done a lot of work for women in Nigeria the inherit property across the country," Mr. Godfrey hinted.

The Rivers State Women's Inheritance Bill was initiated and sponsored by Mr. Michael Chinda of Obio/Akpor Constituency II of the Rivers State House of Assembly (RSHA) in the 8th Assembly (2015 - 2019) but could not pass the third reading while in the Ninth Assembly (2019 - 2022) Mr. Chinda reintroduced the Bill and it was eventually passed into law and assented by Governor Wike two months ago. ●

Visually Impaired Persons Call For Free Education, Assent To Disability Bill

Members of the Nigeria Association of the Blind, Edo State Chapter, have called on all tiers of government to make education free and create conducive environment for them to move around and do their legitimate business.

The members who embarked on a road walk to the Nigerian Union of Journalists, Edo State Council in celebration of National White Cane Day, urged the Edo State government to assent to the Disability Bill that has been passed by the Edo State House of Assembly.

Chairman of the association, Evangelist Lucky Imafidon, expressed gratitude to the Edo State governor, Mr Godwin Obaseki for his magnanimity to people living with disabilities, especially those with visual

By Iduzee Efe Paul, Benin

impairment but urged him to do more.

"We want to use this opportunity to thank the Edo State Governor, Godwin Obaseki. We want to tell him to do more for us especially in the area of education, we need bursary for people living with visual impairment".

Speaking further, he said: "The relevant authorities should provide free education for us from primary to university level, and also the Disability Bill should be assented to so that it can become a law that will protect our interest and welfare. We want a Disabilities Commission to be created that will take care of our needs."

One of the visually impaired persons, David Iwuala pleaded

with government to create an environment that can help them live with minimal assistance.

He said the White Cane Day is significant because it shows that the person holding the White Cane have visual impairment and pleaded with Nigerians to always assist those with visual impairment.

"We want drivers and other road users to always assist people with visual impairment anywhere on the road. In Edo State, it has become increasingly dangerous to move around and that is why we came up with 'Safety in an Unsafe Environment'. It is a call to action; those saddled with the responsibility of making laws or creating policies should do so with the aim of assisting people with visual impairment," he stressed. ●

Money Wife In Becheve Village...

Cont'd from page 29

abuse of girls in this manner.

I know you feel a lot of rage right now, I feel the same way too.

An outrage is not sustainable, we need to take practical steps to save these girls.

I'm back in Lagos now but we'll be returning to Becheve in a couple of days with a team of 20 people.

This is our plan:

1. With Pastor Richard's help, we're creating a Database for women between the ages of 18-40 who are money wives and already have kids. We are going to pair them up with a support system of female mentors, where they can get monthly stipends to support their farming business. We are going to put out a form for people to apply to be female mentors for these women. You will have to commit time to speak to them monthly so, they know they're not alone in this world. This is very important.

2. We have selected 50 girls between the ages of 5-18 who are money wives across all the Becheve villages and we will camp them in Ugbakoko for two weeks to teach them chess, mentor

them and create a safe space where they can talk about their ordeals. We'll also need to partner with organizations leading the advocacy to end Gender based violence and early child marriage in remote communities. Please send email to: hello@chessinlumsafrica.com

3. In our time in the community, we will go from house to house to educate the families about this barbaric act and do our best to eradicate this primitive mindset amongst the young men and the families selling their daughters.

4. We will partner with financial institutions to offer loans to the people of Becheve as an alternative to using their daughters as collateral.

Poverty and high levels of illiteracy is the major culprit here. The local school in the community is dilapidated. We will renovate it and place all the girls on educational scholarship support. We will also partner with other schools around and get as many girls as possible back to school.

5. We will host a chess tournament and community event at the end of the 2 weeks training

camp so the girls can showcase their talents to the entire community.

6. We will invite all community leaders and villagers so they can come watch the girls show intellectual prowess.

7. We will make sure all the village heads commit and sign to a law that criminalizes the money wife tradition in Becheve and get the police to enforce this law.

8. We will set up a permanent training Centre (Safe space) in the community where the girls can continue to learn chess, introduce them to a world of technology and build a library where they can read new books and learn about the world beyond the confines of Becheve.

9. We will renegotiate the deals for the money wives under the age of 18 and pay back the debt their families owe to the lender.

10. We will do all of these things whilst simultaneously running a global campaign to end child marriage in Africa.

WE WILL NOT LEAVE BECHEVE UNTIL SOMETHING CHANGES!

By Tunde Onakoye

Rivers Releases N78b...

Cont'd from page 33

reconstruction and remodeling of the Kalabari High School, Buguma, Kalabari National College, (KNC) Buguma, the external works and furnishing of Western Ahoada High School, Government Secondary School, Ogu that is 90 percent complete, and the Community Secondary School, Okoronodo that is 60 percent complete.

On his part, the Commissioner for Works, Dr. Dax George-Kelly Dakorinama Alabo, said the council awarded new contracts and approved payment for on-going projects.

"The projects spread across Local Government Areas and senatorial districts of the State. Some of which were approved today by council and some were ratified."

He said the council approved the contract for the construction of 8.168 km Abua-Emoh-Iyak-Ighom; Emoh/Egbolom access road and the 9.2m km Ekagho-Ogboloma-Adada link road in Abua/Odual Local government area.

George-Kelly explained that some other new road projects include, the Alode-Onne road and Agbonchia-Ogale-Ebebu-East/West road, Alode internal roads in Eleme council; Eneka roundabout-IgboEtche link road in Obio/Akpor/Etche councils; Akpabu-Egbeda-Elele-

Omoku link road; Akpabu-Odidi link road; Nkpor-Mgbudohia link road; Elele internal roads; Elekahia internal roads among others.

The Commissioners of Works, who reinstated the resolve of the governor Wike's administration not to abandon any project it started, further disclosed that the council has approved payment for the on going Ahoada-Omoku dualization project; Omoku-Aligwu-Kirigeni road, Omoku-Egbema road, Okochiri internal roads, Ogoni-Andoni Unity road, Chokocho-Igbodo road, flyover 11 and 12, dualisation of Bori-Kono road and several others.

Also speaking, the Commissioner for Information, Chris Finebone said governor Wike has approved the appointment of 7000 Justices of Peace to help ensure the prevalence of peace, law and order within their jurisdiction.

"I am pleased to inform you that the State governor has just approved the appointment of 7000 Justices of Peace. It has been an all-round approach to development for which our people will be eternally grateful to our hard working governor."

Kelvin Ebiri
Special Assistant (Media) to the Governor of Rivers State

November 2, 2022. ●

WANEP Trains 40 Nigerian Youths On Peacebuilding And Security

In a bid to build the capacity of young persons in leadership, peacebuilding and advocacy, a three-day train-the-trainers workshop was recently conducted for 40 young women and young

men in Abuja by the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) Nigeria, in partnership with the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP).

National Coordinator of WANEP Nigeria- Chief Mrs. Bridget Osakwe said at the commencement of the workshop that though the United Nations Council on December 9, 2015, adopted Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) which was preceded by a series of advocacy efforts from a number of Non-Governmental Organizations, the adopted framework for peace has not been implemented in the country demanding the WANEP intervention.

Said she, "It was passed after more than 10,000 young people called for it in the Amman Youth Declaration, adopted during the Global Forum on Youth, Peace and Security agenda which was very much inspired by the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS).

"However, these frameworks have not translated into meaningful participation of young men and young women in formal



Participants and Resource persons at the WANEP-GNWP Youth Training

Peacebuilding processes at the state or federal level in Nigeria, hence the need for this training workshop".

The training brought together 40 young women and young men from across the states in the

country and the federal capital territory. It had participants from conflicts

affected communities, those religious and ethnic minorities, refugees and displaced women, women with disabilities, and other

Marginalized groups. Speaking on the aims and objectives of the training workshop, WANEP's programme head, Mrs.

Patience Ikpeh Obaulo highlighted creating and spreading awareness on Women

Peace and Security, the Youth Peace and Security agenda as well as building the leadership capacity of youths for a better society.

"Raising awareness and consolidate knowledge on the WPS and YPS agendas amongst young

Persons, enhancing the leadership and peace rebuilding capacities of young persons to advocate for

the implementation of the WPS and YPS agendas, to establish a network of young persons and gender equality allies, that will meaningfully participate, influence and lead community-based peacebuilding particularly, the implementation of the WPS and YPS resolutions, serve as conflict monitors, advocacy for gender equality, women's rights, human rights, and gender responsive humanitarian response, among others."

The very interactive training revealed need for more engagement with youths on issues especially those relating to youth empowerment, peace and security.

Commenting on the outcome of the youth engagement, Chief Mrs. Bridget Osakwe said, "It was obvious that most participants were not aware of the resolutions as they have little knowledge on Women, Peace and Security and Youth Peace and Security.

"Since Nigeria is a country with the largest population of youth, it simply means that their lack of knowledge and understanding of the agendas is tantamount to lack of proper implementation of the WPS and YPS agendas even at the local level."

The participants pledged to individually share and implement knowledge acquired from the training as they return to their different communities. •

Resolutions Adopted At The End Of A One Day Inauguration Of A Police Stakeholders Partnership And Accountability Forum And Capacity Building For Human Rights Monitors In Rivers State Organized By Rulaac On Wednesday, October 19, 2022 At Visa Karena Hotel, Port Harcourt.

RULAAC, in partnership with Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA), organized a one day inauguration of a Police/Stakeholders Partnership and Accountability Forum and capacity building for human rights monitors on Wednesday, October 19, 2022 at Visa Karena Hotels, Port Harcourt.

The forum was part of the Community Access to Justice and Criminal Justice interactive Project being implemented across the country by RULAAC with support from OSIWA.

The overall objective of the project is to facilitate the coordination and projection of the voices of the communities affected by insecurity and to promote their involvement in designing and implementing workable solutions to insecurity in their communities as well as enhance access to justice to the poor and most vulnerable groups who are unequally and disproportionately affected by a dysfunctional criminal justice system.

Participants were drawn from NGOs, CBOs, Community leaders, local security outfits, media, women and vulnerable groups among others. Police officers from the Rivers State Police Command who were expected to be part of the forum

were however, not able to honour to attend.

CONCERNS / OBSERVATIONS AFTER ROBUST DISCUSSIONS WHICH CENTRED ON HUMAN RIGHTS, ACCESS TO JUSTICE, EFFECTIVE POLICING, INSECURITY AMONG OTHERS, PARTICIPANTS:

1. Expressed concern over the absence of officers of the Rivers State Police Command at the forum despite spirited efforts to bring them on board. Their absence created an impression that the police was not interested in dialogues/discussions on human rights as well as collaborations with stakeholders that would bring about better policing.

2. Observed the need to foster a regular interaction, engagement and dialogue between the police and communities so that they can jointly determine policing priorities, find workable solutions to crime and insecurity and prevent human rights violations.

3. Resolved to sustain concerted efforts to ensure that partnership with the police is achieved.

4. Expressed concern that two years after the #ENDSARS Protests which sought to recreate the police and build human rights

approach to policing, the atrocities of the security operatives against citizens are even becoming worse and have continued to grow at an alarming rate.

5. Noted that unresolved cases of police brutalities, enforced disappearances, torture, illegal arrests, detention without trials, all sorts of human rights violations with impunity, extra-judicial killings among others which led to the 2020 #ENDSARS protests across the country still abound in the society.

6. Further raised concern that the ENDSARS panel report seems to have been swept under the carpet without being implemented in Rivers State particularly, despite the huge resources and efforts committed to produce the report.

7. Condemned violations of peoples' rights by authorities with impunity and demand that violators of rights should be made to face justice.

8. Noted that human rights violations breed public resentment and widen the trust gap between the police and the citizens they ought to be protecting.

9. Expressed serious concern that in spite of huge funds being earmarked for security annually, including

borrowed funds, insecurity has continued to soar astronomically since the present regime came to power. The government has remained clueless and has no doubt, been overwhelmed by insecurity. Kidnapping, murder, banditry, terrorism attacks, attacks on communities by herdsmen, armed robberies and all forms of organized violent crimes have become the order of the day, while funds budgeted for fighting insecurity are allegedly looted. The government, headed by a retired army general has failed woefully to guarantee security of lives and properties.

RESOLUTIONS

1. Participants therefore called on the police to increase their commitment to checking persistent human rights violations in order to rebuild public confidence and invite public support. Police should punish human rights violators, including violations witnessed during the #ENDSARS protest.

2. Participants further called on the Rivers State government to implement the #ENDSARS panel report without further delay.

3. Participants called on citizens and stakeholders to ensure that they use their votes wisely in the 2023 general elections to ensure that none of those who are part of this failed

regime in any way would remain in power beyond May 2023. They should vote for those capable of leading the country out of the pit it has been pushed into.

4. Participants called on government to live up to its responsibilities of providing security as well as abiding by its international commitments with respect to human rights standards which Nigeria is signatory.

5. Participants resolved to continue to make efforts towards a better police-citizens relationship, effective policing, and protection of human rights in the society, and to ensure that rights violations do not go unredressed.

6. Participants further resolved to take the issue of monitoring, documenting and reporting human rights violations/abuses serious in order to keep on exposing atrocities by security operatives.

Conclusion
Participants thanked RULAAC and OSIWA for organizing the meeting and promised that the discussions will continue at the social media platforms created. They requested that such convening should not be a one off event.

Signed:
RULAAC, 08064974531

PRESS RELEASE

MRA Calls On Government To Investigate All Attacks Against Journalists, Prosecute And Punish Perpetrators

For Immediate Release

LAGOS, Wednesday, November 2, 2022: * Media Rights Agenda (MRA) today called on Governments at all levels to fulfill their obligations to ensure the safety of journalists by investigating all attacks against media practitioners as well as prosecuting and punishing the perpetrators of such attacks. The organization said this would send a strong signal to those who attack journalists that they can no longer do so with impunity while also giving the media the confidence to carry out their functions without fear.

MRA made the call at a press conference it organized to commemorate the 2022 edition of the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists and the 10-year anniversary of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, which was endorsed by the UN Chief Executives Board, the highest-level coordination mechanism in the UN system.

Addressing journalists in Lagos, MRA's Programme Director, Mr. Ayode Longe, reminded the government that the security of citizens is one of its primary functions and urged the Federal Government to develop and adopt robust mechanisms to protect journalists and ensure their safety and security.

Noting that 10 years after the UN came out with the Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists, Nigeria has not taken any concrete action to stem the spate of attacks against journalists and the media in the country, he said the increasing level of attacks against media practitioners and organizations in the country was shocking and ought to be a source of concern for everyone.

According to Mr. Longe, MRA has recorded and documented dozens, even hundreds, of attacks against journalists over the years and is yet to hear of any instance

where a journalist has been killed in Nigeria and a serious investigation was conducted and the perpetrators arrested and prosecuted.

He challenged the Government to cite any attack on journalists or the media that it has seriously investigated and share with the public the outcome of any such investigation, including details of those arrested and prosecuted for the offence.

Specifically, Mr. Longe said, since the beginning of the current democratic dispensation on May 29, 1999 to date, MRA has collated and documented cases of 19 journalists killed and in none of these killings has the Federal Government investigated, arrested, prosecuted or brought any of the perpetrators to justice.

Besides, he said, in the last one year alone, MRA collated and documented over 47 incidents of attacks against journalists, media workers and media houses, adding that in the course of their work, journalists are arrested and detained, assaulted and beaten, abducted, have their equipment and gadgets confiscated and, in some cases, destroyed, have their operations disrupted among other form of attacks.

Mr. Longe noted that MRA's records showed that men of the Nigerian Police are the major perpetrators of the attacks against journalists as MRA had documented over 15 of such incidents in which they were the perpetrators, with armed hoodlums and political thugs coming a close second.

He said it was ironic that the Nigerian Police and other law enforcement and security agents that Nigerians should be relying on to protect journalists and the media from attacks by political thugs and other bad actors are themselves the worst culprits.

Mr. Longe expressed concern that the Police are also being frequently used to

harass and intimidate journalists and other media workers by the rich and powerful who are uncomfortable with the media beaming the searchlight on them and their activities.

He noted that in the last six months, MRA has recorded at least six such incidents where journalists were accused of criminal defamation, cyberstalking or such other offence by the law enforcement agencies acting on the biddings of politicians.

Reminding the government that the world is moving away from criminalizing expression and as such journalists should not be arrested, detained or charged to court over stories and reports that they have published, he noted that the Police continue to use the provisions of Section 24 of the Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, Etc) Act, 2015 to charge journalists and other Nigerians with cyberstalking despite the fact that the ECOWAS Community Court of Justice has declared the provision to be a violation of the right to freedom of expression.

Mr. Longe described the continued use of the provision of the Cybercrimes Act to harass journalists and other citizens as a brazen disregard for the decision of the ECOWAS Court, a violation of Nigeria's treaty obligations and an unjustifiable disrespect for the court.

He called on members of the public to take an interest in the safety of journalists and do everything within their power to help protect them and take action to ensure that those who attack them are brought to justice.

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Rivers Releases N78b For Completion Of Projects, Award Of New Ones

The Rivers State Executive Council has considered and approved the release of N78B for the completion of various ongoing projects across sectors and flag-off of new ones.

The approval was given at its meeting that was presided over by Governor Nyesom Ezenwo Wike at Government House in Port Harcourt on Wednesday.

Briefing journalists after the meeting, Commissioner for Finance, Budget and Economic planning, Dr Isaac Kamalu said the approval was made to ensure that ongoing projects are not left uncompleted by the contractors for lack of fund.

"The Rivers State Government has released the sum of N78Billion for payment of ongoing projects and flag off of new projects across all the local government areas in the state.

"Again, the government has specifically released the sum of N1.8Billion, representing 80 percent of the capital provisions for the judiciary in the 2022 budget for the services of the Rivers State Judiciary."

Also speaking, the Commissioner for Health, Prof. Princewill Chike said the Ministry of health is not left out among ministries to benefit from the release of the funds.

According to him, the Dr. Peter Odili Cancer and Cardiovascular Disease Diagnostics and Treatment Centre which has been completed, has the contractor fully paid.

"You remember in June last year, (2021) N26Billion was earmarked for that contract. It's been completed, well furnished with the most modern medical equipment for the attack of different types of cancers.

"And the other thing that the health sector benefitted is the Rivers State University Teaching Hospital where we have Basic Clinical Faculty and the Clinical Faculty as well as the Renal and Dialysis Centre and the House Officers Quarters which have also been completed and will be commissioned."

Prof. Chike also said there are other ongoing projects been funded by the State government and they included

the Kelsey Harrison Hospital which is at an advance stage as well as the Dental and Maxillofacial Hospital in Port Harcourt, all of which are also at advance stages of completion.

On his part, the Commissioner for Special Projects, Deinma Iyalla said the ministry has its memo presented to the Council approved and also ratified the sale of the remodelled Riv-Bank insurance building.

"Currently, the building is known as Senator John Azuta-Mbata House. Access Bank offered to buy the building for the sum of N3.8B. It cost us N2.8B to remodel it.

"The essence of the sale of this building, Access Bank promised that they are going to use it as their regional office, which means they will create employment and impact positively on economic activities within Port Harcourt."

Iyalla also listed other projects to benefit from the released fund to include, the sand-filling and reclamation of 20hectres of land in Ogu town.

According to him, the fund will also serve for the completion of the University of Port Harcourt Convocation Arena, Ataba Secondary School reconstruction and furnishing, Rivers State University Staff quarters buildings at Ahoada, Etche, Emohua and the main campus.

Other projects for completion are the 13.8km Rumuodogo 1 and 2 Roads, Woji-Aleto-Alesa-Refinery Road, Hostel A and B, and the auditorium at Yanagoa campus of the Nigerian Law School, Justice Mary Odili Judicial Institute, Federal Judicial Service Commission liaison office building, South-South in Port Harcourt.

The Commissioner of Education, Prof. Chinedu Mmom also addressed journalists saying that projects under his ministry will also benefit.

They included the Government Secondary School, Eneka, Government Secondary School, Emohua, and the Government Secondary School, Imago in Abua/Odual Local Government.

Other projects include, the

Cont'd on page 31



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