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Edo State Govt Seals ₦228b Deal with Triple A Infrastructure, InfraCorp for Reconstruction of Benin-Asaba Expressway

...as Obaseki urges sustained partnership between states and FG, calls for concession of Benin-Auchi road, others



Edo State Government has signed a strategic agreement with AAA Infrastructure Nigeria Limited (Triple A Infrastructure) and Infrastructure Corporation of Nigeria (InfraCorp) to reconstruct the 120km Benin-Asaba Expressway. The pivotal ₦228 billion deal which is to be funded by Triple A and InfraCorp, with Edo State Government as an equity shareholder, under the 25-year Highway Development Management Initiative (HDMI) concession to Africa Plus Partners, is designed to aid seamless transportation between Edo and Delta states and other states of the federation, while fostering economic growth within the region.

The Federal Executive Council (FEC), according to the Infrastructure Concession Regulatory Commission (ICRC), had in 2023 approved the concession of nine federal road corridors under the Highway Development and Management Initiative (HDMI), which aims to ensure the management and development of federal roads.

It would however seem that the concessions were yet to produce any desired result, considering the lingering conditions of federal highways, particularly the despicable state of federal roads in Edo State, which has led to incessant outcries by the Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki, in drawing the attention of the federal government to the harrowing conditions of federal roads in the state and its adverse effects on the populace.

The outcries by Governor Obaseki, for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of federal highways across the state are finally paying off with the recently signed agreement. Edo State Government has invested over a billion naira in remedial works on federal roads in the state, particularly the Benin-Asaba expressway.

This is also coming at a time when the state government has commenced a massive reconstruction of roads across the state, leveraging the current dry season to improve road infrastructures in the state.

Signing the deal at the Edo State Government House in Benin City, on January 31 2024, Edo State Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki, remarked that the event was a historic milestone for the nation's economic prospects, noting that the Benin-Asaba road which has long been plagued by several challenges, has served as a lifeline for transporting goods from Lagos ports to the eastern and south-south regions.

The Governor stated that the concession of federal roads not only promises to rejuvenate the Benin-Asaba Expressway but also opens up avenues for a more profitable investment of pension savings in aiding the nation's redevelopment.

According to Governor Obaseki, "We are making history with this sort of transaction which is almost three decades in the making. The Benin-Asaba artery is very critical to the economy of Nigeria, because it is the route that moves bulk of goods from the ports in Lagos, from the states in the west to the eastern part and south-south of Nigeria.

"So you can imagine the cost that transporters and logistics managers have had to bear, which has been translated into high prices of goods and services in this country because of the nature and bad states of these roads. And the largest portion of this road, almost about 60km of this road is within Edo State. In fact this road starts from Ring Road, right through Abudu, Agbor to Asaba.

"In the year 2001, when a committee was set up to redesign the pension arrangement in Nigeria, the whole idea was that we should move into a contributory pension arrangement and begin the process of capital formation in the country by getting workers in the country to contribute to their pensions. And with the pension contribution, we will invest in rebuilding the infrastructures of this country. That was the dream about 30 years ago. I recalled vividly, I was in that committee, so was my predecessor in office, Comrade Adams Oshiomhole, and it was that committee that led and birthed the pension fund we have in the country today.

"The pension funds today have in excess of 16 trillion naira in savings, but there are no outlets to invest them in. Most of them are forced to invest in short term papers issued by the federal government. With transactions like this coming on stream, we would now be hopefully creating opportunities for these pension savings which will now be put into investment that would redevelop Nigeria. This transaction for us is very significant and we believe and hope that it would be the first in several that would come."

Addressing the burdensome impact of the deteriorating road conditions on citizens, the Governor revealed that the state has recently embarked on a remedial solution, investing approximately one billion naira, in an effort to alleviate its adverse effects on the populace.

Obaseki said: "You recall that at a certain point in time, we have had to invest our money to undertake some remedial measures to save that road because most of our citizens were almost cut off because of the bad state of the road."

He commended the federal government's decision to grant concession for the road, adding that the choice of successful bidders adds a certain layer of assurance, while noting the state government's commitment to investing in such concessions on interstate roads passing through the state, for developmental purposes.

"I am glad that the federal government has now concessioned the road, and not just to anybody, but to people who know what to do. People who have real money, not portfolio managers who just sign contracts and go sell the contract. I know the partners, Infracorp was set up by Central Bank of Nigeria and others as shareholders. The winner of this concession we know very well.

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EDO
STATE
GOVERNMENT



The whole purpose of life is to plan for when you are not there, and hope that you make your world a better place than you met it. As a government, we will not negotiate planning particularly our physical environment.

-Governor Godwin Obaseki

Edo Records Over N50b Investments in Oil Palm, Cassava, as Gov Obaseki Tours Investment Facilities, Farm by Agro-Allied Resources and Processing Nigeria

...1,500 direct employment from ARPN investment alone

...four out of eight ESOPP investors are biggest users of cassava in Nigeria, three domiciled in Edo



Edo State Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki, has expressed delight over the huge investment in oil palm, cassava cultivation and cassava processing plant by Agro-Allied Resources and Processing Nigeria (ARPN) Ltd, in Odighi Community, Ovia North East Local Government of Edo State. Obaseki who took a tour round the investment facilities and farm by ARPN Ltd, alongside the management of the Edo State Oil Palm Programme (ESOPP), on Thursday January 25 2024, noted that the state is already benefiting from the investment, especially in the area of employment opportunities.

Obaseki remarked: "I joined the investors from the Edo State Oil Palm Programme (ESOPP) to visit the facilities and farm of one of the investors in the programme, Agro-Allied Resources and Processing Nigeria (ARPN)–Dufil Prima Foods Ltd, who, as you know, are the makers of the very popular brand, Indomie. They got land from the state government under this programme in 2019 to farm oil palm, and once they started with their oil palm investment, they then saw the need to diversify into cassava, because of the availability of cassava in the area. "They have invested in excess of 25 billion naira in different investments. We are here this afternoon to see how far they have gone; what they have done, what challenges they have, and how, as government and sub-investors, we can collectively work with each other to reduce the risks and encourage more investments."

Stressing on the benefits which accrue to the state from such investments, the Governor stated that from the agricultural and food sufficiency standpoints, the state is already benefitting from the food items that are being produced, alongside their multiplier effects and boost to the economy. Obaseki said: "Beyond that, as a state, we have received quite substantial investments. Just imagine, only one of the investors has invested this amount. It shows you how much has come into the economy of Edo State, and explains why you see a lot of economic activities going on. This is direct investment from them. So, you can imagine the indirect investment; the multiplier effect, the people who are supplying them with other goods and services.

"Here alone, directly, from the farms and the factory, they employ over 1500 people. This is direct employment. This does not include transporters who bring in and take away materials for them. It does not include other farmers in the neighbourhood who produce and supply them. So, you can imagine, for every one job they create directly, there will be at least 4 to 5 other jobs that go with this investment. So, they are helping us reduce the challenge of unemployment. There is the benefit of bringing in more people into the area. They are helping us develop the state, open up space, expand the state, and create more opportunities."

"Lastly, it signals what is possible and what could happen. So, it is Dufil today, it is Flour Mill tomorrow, which means that other people in the food business now know that Edo is one place you can come and invest and make a lot of returns, and grow your business. So, I believe those benefits are very clear to everybody; even our critics now understand why Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) matter", the Governor added.

Responding to the concerns arising from the demand of enormous quantities of cassava in the factory and its effects on local consumption of by-products such as garri, Obaseki assured that the presence of the company will increase the productivity of farmers in the state.



He said: "First, the variety of cassava which they are using for industrial production is different from the one we eat. Secondly, they have now brought in more knowledge and expertise on how to grow cassava. So even for the variety we eat, they will now help us improve the yield and productivity of those our farmers who are cropping cassava for feeding.

"One of the things we have decided to do, working with the investors, is see how to encourage those people who are already farming cassava, on how to expand their production and plant variety for industrial use, because there will be a buyer waiting to take up whatever you produce."

Obaseki added: "What is even more interesting for me, which I found out today, is that the by-products are not wasted. They are used as feedstock for other industries like the piggery industry. And I hear that those by-products are in very high demand. So, it is a chain. It is like a cycle. This is just the beginning but it is a very important and significant beginning."

On his part, the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Agro-Allied Resources and Processing Nigeria (ARPN) Ltd, Khetan Madhukar, appreciated the Governor and his team for their support thus far in the realization of the project. He said: "We are proud to say that we have very much benefitted from His Excellency and this programme, and the arrangement he and his team have given to us throughout our journey from 2019 till date."

Speaking on the collaboration with and benefits derived from the investment by the host communities, Madhukar said: "We have about 17 communities in our vicinity. We are getting good support from them. And as his Excellency mentioned, direct employment is about 1,500 people. Out of that, over 600 people are working from the community through direct employment. First, we give them certain jobs; contracts to build our housing, road clearing work. So, they support us, and we get good support from them. "At the same time, with the ESOPP programme, we have signed an agreement with them, of which we have done certain Corporate Social Responsibility programmes like road grading, solar installation programme, and in the long run, we will give educational scholarship to them."

Commenting on security infrastructures for the investments, Madhukar noted: "As far as the question of security is concerned, we are in touch with the Chief Security Officer, Government House, on a continuous basis. Thankfully so far, we have not faced any problem. One or two incidents we faced, we immediately alerted the Chief Security Officer, Government House, and within 24 hours we got our problem resolved. After that we never faced any problem, because we have the local vigilante to protect us. We have our own security, and at the same time, we have the back bone support from His Excellency and his team. We alert them if there is any issue, and we get immediate response from them."

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Edo State Govt, Fuzhou Polytechnic, and Yongxing Steel Sign MoU to Boost Technical and Vocational Education in Edo

...agreement to afford Edo youths vocational training opportunities in China, secure jobs in Chinese companies in Nigeria



Edo State Government, Fuzhou Polytechnic, China, and Yongxing Steel Company Ltd., Benin, on Tuesday, January 16 2024, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to boost technical and vocational education in Edo State. In his remark during the event, the Edo State Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki appreciated the President, Fuzhou Polytechnic, Prof. Chen Niandong, for the warm reception given to him and his team during their visit to the polytechnic in November last year.

Commenting on the significance of the agreement, Obaseki said: "You can imagine how glad and satisfied I am today that we are signing this tripartite agreement with the support of our friends, Yongxing Steel Company Ltd.

"This agreement is very significant and important because it is the first agreement we are signing with a private sector partner, Yong Xing Steel, which indicates that we are not just sending children or youths to come and receive education in China, but we are preparing them for work with the support of Chinese companies that have already invested in Nigeria.

"I want to assure you of the support and cooperation of the government of Edo State at any time to ensure that this agreement and this relationship become very successful."

On her part, the Consul-General of the People's Republic of China in Lagos, Ms. Yan Yuqing, who was accompanied by a team of delegates, commended the Governor for his commitment to education, especially in the field of vocational education for youths, while expressing optimism towards education and talent development in Edo State.

She said: "Today, as the Consul-General of the People's Republic of China in Lagos, I hope to further facilitate the implementation of the relevant cooperation between Edo Polytechnic

and the Fuzhou Polytechnic, and contribute to the technical education and talent development in China and Nigeria, specifically Edo State.

"We will put every effort to realize the MoU between the two institutes, and also the Yongxing Steel Factory. I hope that in the future, more and more Edo students will have the chance to visit China, to study in China, and feel Chinese cultures and styles with their own eyes."

In the same vein, the Edo State Commissioner for Education, Dr. Joan Oviawe, expressed delight over the agreement, which she said is part of the move of the Obaseki-led administration in reenacting education in the state.

She commented: "We are very thrilled at this international partnership and linkage with Fuzhou Polytechnic. This is coming on the heels of a similar MoU that we have already signed with Shaanxi Polytechnic in Xianyang Province, China. So, our Polytechnic is very willing and ready to engage in this mutually beneficial and productive collaboration with Fuzhou Polytechnic.

"We are also equally excited about this opportunity because it is in line with His Excellency's vision to reenact education in Edo State, to develop the human capital of the State, and to provide skills acquisition opportunities for the many young people in the state."

Oviawe added: "Under the framework of the EdoBEST 2.0. initiative of Governor Obaseki, we are looking at providing opportunities for young people in Edo State to develop skills. Starting at the secondary level with our technical schools.

One of our flagship technical schools is the Benin Technical College, which we are also interested in, in expanding opportunities and linkages between us and China."

Nosakhare Agbonigiarhuoyi

EDITORIAL

Appraising Road Infrastructure in Edo



Roads are an essential part of development, connecting communities, cities and states with one another, serving as a cross-cultural tool and linking both temporal and geospatial settings to further strengthen historicity. Roads in Edo State, Nigeria, have witnessed remarkable improvements in recent years, boosting economic activities and improving the quality of life of the people.

Over 565 road projects stretching over 737km have been undertaken by the Governor Godwin Obaseki administration. Some of these roads were rehabilitated or reconstructed and others constructed from the scratch, with many of these new roads linking communities, and integrating them into the national and state economies.

Commuters and residents in the state who ply the roads have also commended the Governor who does not encourage fanfare and publicity in showcasing these infrastructural strides, or waste scarce resources in organizing road commissioning ceremonies. The Governor has always preferred to be judged by his performance. Residents in the state have also remarked that though the state government cannot fix all roads in the state in seven or eight years, they expressed optimism that subsequent administration should be able to pick up from where the Obaseki administration stopped.

The Irukepken-Ekpoma road, which links the Irukepken community with Ekpoma in Esan West Local Government Area (LGA) has been notoriously impassable due to its poor condition for years. This road has now undergone a complete transformation, becoming a modern carriageway with well-designed drainage systems and street lights, making it safer for motorists during night time travels. The road project has not only improved connectivity between Benin, Ekpoma and Auchi but also created new

economic opportunities in the area as traders and motorists can now transport goods and services seamlessly. Another noteworthy project is the ongoing construction of Uwelu Road which is aimed at easing traffic congestion in the Ugbowo axis, linking over 20 communities in Egor local government area of the state. This 9.7km road will provide an alternative route for motorists and reduce the pressure on existing roads in the city.

The current road rehabilitation projects spread evenly across the state. Iyoba Road for example has been reconstructed while the Benin-Agbor road which connects Edo South with Delta State was recently awarded for reconstruction.

Roads currently in the works in the state include; Central Market Road, Ehor; Blessed Avenue Road, off Country Home Motel Road and Limit Road; Edaiken Primary School Road; Omomo Street, Isibor Street and Ugiayugbor Street (Ekenhuan Road axis); Oko Central Road, off Airport Road; Forestry and Upper Forestry Road; Moye Street off Adolor College Road; Aigbalegbe Street, Isihor Quarters off Ugbowo Lagos Road; School of Health Road and adjoining.

Others include; Mechanic Road, Siluko Road; Temboga Road; Okpagha-Amufi Road; Sobe-Sabogida Ora Road; Ikiran-Oke-Ikakumon Road; Auchi Polytechnic Campus 2 Road; Roads in GRA axis; 2nd Ugbor Road; Eweka Street and Adesuwa Street, (New Benin axis); Portions of Benin Abraka Road, and a host of others.

Governor Obaseki's commitment to improving road infrastructures is laudable. In addition to improving connectivity, the focus of his administration on road infrastructure has also helped to facilitate economic activities and improve the quality of life for citizens and residents of the state.

EDO YOUTH AMBASSADOR

Victor Osimhen – The Edo Youth Who Speaks Unparalleled Football Language



In the dynamic landscape of global achievements, the youths of Edo State stand out as a beacon of excellence, consistently soaring to new heights and proudly representing the state on the international stage. Their remarkable accomplishments and significant contributions resonate far beyond regional borders, serving as a testament to the extraordinary talent, resilience, and dedication that characterize their spirit.

Victor James Osimhen MFR is one youth who has continued to put Edo on the world stage, with his strides and achievements resonating across the African continent and the globe. Hailed from Eguare in Esan South East local government of Edo State, Nigeria, Osimhen has distinguished himself professionally, currently serving as a striker for Napoli in Serie A and representing the Nigerian national team in international outings. He has been acknowledged as one of the premier strikers globally, and renowned for his exceptional finishing skills, remarkable pace, formidable strength, and unparalleled athleticism.

Victor Osimhen's rise began with his stellar performance for Nigeria's U-17 team at the 2015 FIFA U-17 World Cup in Chile, where he won both the Golden Boot and Silver Ball awards. Following this breakthrough, he made his first major leap into professional football when he joined Wolfsburg in 2017. Rising through the echelon, from a humble beginning and arduous journey to his current status, breaking through the searing heat of hustle and uncomfortable locale, and displaying in full glare to the national and international community what he is made of, Osimhen has today become a household name both in Nigeria and the globe, gracing that nomenclature with the title, '2023 African Footballer of the Year'. Osimhen who played for Nigeria in the 2024 African Cup of Nations (AFCON) and was instrumental in the team's victories, showcased his remarkable talent which contributed significantly to the team's success.

His brilliant performance at the 2024 African Cup of Nations pushed the Nigerian team to the competition finals where they emerged runner up. Opponents' defenders faced by Nigeria during AFCON 2024 will testify that Victor Osimhen was a nightmare, as he never allowed them a breathing space to sleep nor slumber, as any who ignores his agility and pace did so in their own peril. Though he was not lucky with goals during the competition, Osimhen performed at levels that prompted CAF to call him for a doping test. He was a machine throughout the AFCON competition, becoming a complete pest to defenders and keepers alike. He had the ball in the back of the net 5 times, 4 of which were disallowed unfortunately for various reasons.

Of all 8 Goals by Nigeria at the competition, Osimhen provided assists in two, scored one and won two penalties that led to goals. He had an important role in 5 of Nigeria's 8 goals. One cannot easily forget the fact that Osimhen was top goal scorer in the AFCON qualifiers, as he literally speaks an unparalleled football language, which is goals. When in 2020 Napoli made headlines by securing Osimhen's signature for a club-record fee of 70 million euros, potentially rising to 80 million euros with add-ons, a landmark deal which made him the most expensive African transfer at the time, Osimhen crested a new name on his burgeoning reputation, as one of the most promising talents in world football.

The hefty transfer fee reflected Osimhen's impressive performances, having caught the attention of top European clubs with his standout performances in the French Ligue 1 during the 2019-2020 season. Playing for Lille, he showcased his goal-scoring prowess and versatility as a striker, which led to a bidding war for his services.

Napoli broke their transfer record for Osimhen, as he was seen as the player who could fill the void left by some erstwhile prominent players of the club. While the success of a transfer is often determined over time, the significance of his move to Napoli in 2020 was undeniable. It not only set a new standard for African players transfers but also showcased the growing global recognition of talent from the continent in the football world, with Osimhen as a beacon. Osimhen has indeed earned recognition for his exceptional skills and contributions to sport. His impressive performances have garnered him numerous accolades throughout his career, among which stands out the prestigious title of Best African Player of the Year 2023.

Osimhen played a pivotal role in Napoli's triumphant Serie A campaign, securing the league title after 33 years. He not only emerged as the league's leading goal-scorer with a remarkable 26 goals but also set a new record for the highest goal tally by an African player. In recognition of his outstanding performance, Osimhen received the prestigious Best Striker Award, followed by the honor of being named Serie A Footballer of the Year a few months later. Victor Osimhen's journey underscores the importance of perseverance and hard work in achieving excellence. Despite facing numerous setbacks and failures along the way, he continued to push himself and hone his skills, eventually emerging as one of the hottest strikers in the world. His story is an inspiration to all aspiring youths, highlighting the value of resilience and determination in the pursuit of one's dreams.

Undoubtedly, the youths in Edo have boundless potential, propelled by the visionary leadership of Governor Godwin Obaseki, who spearheads various transformative initiatives across the state. With a steadfast commitment to nurturing the growth and progress of its people, coupled with the implementation of robust infrastructural and conducive environments for youth advancement, Edo youths are undoubtedly poised for remarkable achievements on the global stage.

The various sports reforms by the Governor Godwin Obaseki administration are geared towards developing future 'Osimhens' who would continue to serve as beacons of hope for the upcoming generation. The reforms were also crucial to the uplift of the state-owned team, Bendel Insurance Football Club from relegation into the Nigerian Professional Football League (NPFL), featuring in the Confederation Cup and returning to the continental stage after 28 years. This earned Edo State Government 'Best Government Sponsorship' award in the Nigeria Professional Football League 2023 season (NPFL23).

Victor Osimhen was conferred with a national honor by the Nigerian government in 2023, as Member of the Order of the Federal Republic (MFR). Also, in recognition of the outstanding performance by the Edo-born African Footballer of the Year, Victor Osimhen, Governor Obaseki has promised to host him and other Super Eagles players of Edo origin, after the 2024 African Cup of Nations. Obaseki's leadership has not only provided opportunities for the youths, but has also fostered an atmosphere conducive to innovation and creativity. The implementation of progressive policies and the establishment of platforms for skills development have empowered the youth to explore their full potential. His visionary leadership is propelling Edo State towards remarkable achievements on the global stage.

By empowering youths in the state, and creating opportunities for their growth and development, Obaseki is laying the foundation for a prosperous and sustainable future. Edo youths are not just achievers; they are trailblazers, shaping a narrative of success that reverberates globally.

John Ewah & Wisdom Agbonta



Edo Commences Free Health Insurance for Pensioners, Mandates Employers on Health Insurance Coverage for Staff



Edo State Government has commenced free enrolment of pensioners into Edo State Health Insurance Scheme (EdoHIS). Governor Godwin Obaseki made this known, on Thursday December 21 2023, while addressing pensioners in the state, at Edo State Government House, in Benin City.

In his address, the Governor commended the Director General of the Edo State Health Insurance Commission, Dr. Rock Amegor, and his team, for their unrelenting efforts towards the success of the scheme. Obaseki while speaking on the rationale behind the initiative noted that the welfare of senior citizens should be prioritized, to serve as a propellant for civil and public servants while rendering services to the state.

Obaseki said: “As a government, we took it as a priority to take your interests and put them on the front burner. Retirement should not be a condemnation to death. We want you to retire and live another 50, 70 years, so that we can continue to enjoy you. “We are not only concerned about the people who are working today and producing for us, we are even more concerned about those who have worked, because those who are working today are also looking into the future; and the way we are treating those who have retired will largely influence how they will react and respond, because they will have to make decisions.

“Healthcare is a major cost that pensioners face. That is why we decided as a state that we will now include pensioners in our health insurance arrangement”.

“It is an offence in Edo for any employer not to have health insurance for those working for them; because if they are sick, they should be able to walk into any hospital or primary healthcare centre to receive treatment.

“We are not here to deceive our people. We are here to work for them, because God has given us an opportunity that we must use well”, the Governor added.

Encouraging the state pensioners to take advantage of the scheme, the Governor said: “If you are a retiree in Edo State, please come and register for health insurance. Because you have served, it is free to you. Our government will pay for you; we will pay your premiums.”

On his part, the Edo State Head of Service, Dr. Anthony Okungbowa Esq., lauded the scheme, which according to him, is a beacon of hope and empowerment.

He said: “Today’s event is not just to inaugurate a new initiative but also to celebrate the ongoing success of the state government in the Edo State Health Insurance Scheme; a programme that is making a huge and very significant impact in the lives of public servants in Edo State.

“This gathering marks a momentous occasion as we enroll our esteemed Edo pensioners into the scheme that has proven to be a beacon of hope and empowerment, ensuring access to quality and affordable healthcare for every public servant in our dear state.”

In his speech, the Director General, Edo State Health Insurance Commission, Dr. Rock Amegor, appreciated the Governor for his kind gesture, in making provision for free healthcare coverage for pensioners across the 18 local governments of the state.

He said: “Your Excellency, the impact of providing healthcare coverage ushers this state into an era of inclusivity, compassion and empathy. This decision you have made sends a message to our civil and public servants, making it much more interesting for the best minds to come and work with us. It further shows that the contribution of our pensioners has not gone unnoticed.

“By this gesture, you have safeguarded the dignity, independence, and ultimately, the quality of life, of every pensioner. You have sent a message that age is not a barrier to receiving the absolute care you need.”

A beneficiary of the scheme, Comrade Ugbo Omoregie, who spoke on behalf of other beneficiaries, recounted his experience, in accessing healthcare with little or no cost. He said: “I am grateful to the State Governor, Mr. Nogheghase Obaseki, and to the health insurance scheme. I had malaria. My wife and I went to St. Philomena hospital. I went for an x-ray and a test. At the end of the day, I paid N3,500. Even in August last year, about 2 months to my retirement, I had a problem that needed surgery. I went to St. Philomena hospital; they carried out the surgery. At the end of the day, I paid nothing.”

With the health insurance scheme, pensioners in Edo now has seamless and easy access to healthcare.

Nosakhare Agbonigiarhuoyi

Rubber Research Institute of Nigeria's Golden Jubilee: Dr. Alli Commends Giving Sight Back to Communities



As part of activities marking the 50th anniversary of the Rubber Research Institute of Nigeria (RRIN), the Institution has collaborated with the Africa Cataract and Eye Foundation to carry out a blindness prevention initiative, as part of giving back to its host communities in Edo State.

The Outreach Programme, which is targeted at carrying out 200 free surgeries, 300 free reading glasses, 100 free de-worming for children, as well as 2500 free eye and medical consultations with medication, was declared open by the Edo State Commissioner for Health, Dr. Samuel Alli, at the Rubber Research Health Centre in Iyanomo, Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area of Edo State.

While declaring the eye camp open, Dr. Alli declared that the health initiative was a beacon of hope; a promise of a brighter, clearer future for countless individuals affected by vision impairment in the host communities.

He stated, "In Nigeria, the landscape of eye health presents both challenges and opportunities. The statistics are sobering yet serve as a call to action. Within the last three years, our nation, Nigeria, has recorded an estimated 24 million cases of vision loss, with 1.3 million of our fellow Nigerians living in the darkness of blindness. The majority of these cases stem from conditions that are, with the right intervention, entirely preventable or treatable. This includes over 80% of blindness cases caused by avoidable factors such as untreated cataracts and uncorrected refractive errors."

He pointed out that the eye camp in Iyanomo is a direct reaction to both national initiatives and local needs. He added thus, "It is a sign of our collaborative dedication to not only treat but also prevent eyesight loss. We seek to give complete eye exams, correct refractive problems, perform cataract procedures, and educate our community about eye health management".

The Commissioner guided that the Institute should embark on a comprehensive renovation of its health facility in order to bring it up-to-date with international standards, as pathway to delivering best health services to the society and its host communities.

The Executive Director of the Rubber Research Institute, Dr. (Mrs.) L. N. Dongo, in her welcome address, expressed gratitude to its partner and the distinguished guests for identifying with the Institute at such a time, saying the eye camp was aimed at giving sight back to the host communities.

She disclosed that the eye camp was designed to last for a week, saying that it was a sign of optimism and a light of change. In her words, "It exemplifies our steadfast dedication to our employees' health and well-being. It is a step toward a future in which vision loss is no longer an impediment to living a full and active life".

Dignitaries present at the event include the Founder of Africa Cataract and Eye Surgery and lead eye surgeon for the camp, Dr. Gabriel Okorodudu; the Chairman of the National Eye Health Committee and Consultant for Rural Eye Health, Nigeria, Prof. Afekhide Omotin; the Head of Medicals, Rubber Research Health Centre, Dr. Daniel Ayeba; top Management staff of the Institute; traditional leaders; members from the host communities, which include Uhie Community, amongst others.

The Rubber Research Institute of Nigeria has played a crucial role in the development of the rubber industry in Nigeria and contributing greatly to the Nation's economy.

Ebuanekpe Joy



Edo Hosts BRACED Commission Governors' Council Meeting, as Commission Pushes for Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration

...Gov Obaseki emerges Chairman of Commission



Edo State on Thursday January 18th 2024, played host to the Governors of south-south states of Nigeria, for the BRACED (Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Edo and Delta) Commission Governors' Council meeting. The meeting which was held at the Edo State Government House in Benin City had in attendance the following state Governors: Senator Douye Diri of Bayelsa; H.E. Sim Fubara of Rivers; H.E. Umo Bassey Eno of Akwa Ibom; Rt. Hon. Sheriff Oborevwori of Delta, represented by his Deputy, Mr. Monday Onyeme, alongside their Commissioners for Budget and Planning, Director General of the Commission, Ambassador Joe Keshi and members of the BRACED Commission Secretariat.

Addressing journalists after the meeting, Governor Godwin Obaseki, speaking on behalf of the Council, disclosed that the meeting which was the first in 2024 marked the commencement of a new era, having been elected as the new Chairman of the BRACED Commission Governor's Council.

According to Obaseki, "This afternoon, the Braced Commission Governors' Council concluded its meeting in Benin City and I have the singular pleasure and honor to have hosted my brother Governors from the other BRACED states. For those of you who may not know, the BRACED Commission is an acronym for the six states of the south-south region of Nigeria. Balyesa, Rivers, Awka Ibom, Cross Rivers, Edo and Delta in that order form the BRACED states.

"I welcome my colleagues to Benin City and I assert that the meeting was the first in this new dispensation. The meeting began with the election of myself, Godwin Obaseki, Governor of Edo State, as the new Chairman of the BRACED Commission Governors' Council. I congratulate the Governors elected in march 2023 and also His Excellency, Senator Douye Diri of Balyesa State who was reelected in November 2023 for the second term"

While highlighting the achievements of the Commission since its inception, Governor Obaseki underscored the importance of convening a meeting involving all south-south states during this critical juncture in Nigeria's economy.

Obaseki stated: "This meeting has been held at a critical time in the history of our country, as we face very serious and enormous challenges. It is against this background that the south-south region must redefine its place and role in the economic development of Nigeria and for the benefit of our people.

"The Director General of our Commission made a presentation to the BRACED Commission, briefing us on the story so far since the Commission came into

inception and informed us of the work which has been done by the Commission in the areas of agriculture, education, environment, power and sports." Obaseki further emphasized the need to redefine the economic role of the region, noting that such a recalibration is imperative for the south-south to make substantial contributions to the well-being of its populace and the overall development of the nation.

"On the various contributions from members, the Council members spoke of the compelling need to collectively accelerate the development of the states and affirm their support for the imperatives of the south-south economic cooperation and integration as a practical step towards the creation of a zone of economic development.

"Arising from this, we express our determination and commitment to drive the process for cooperation and integration in the zone and pledge to address the challenges faced by the BRACED Commission", Obaseki said. He further revealed that the leaders of the south-south region have reached a unanimous decision aimed at propelling the region towards economic prosperity and sustainable development, stressing that the resolution underscores a commitment to fostering regional economic cooperation and integration, with a vision of cultivating a robust local economy to attract investors for the collective well-being of the people in the Region.

Obaseki noted that the Council has, accordingly, resolved to; foster regional economic cooperation and integration, collectively engage the federal government on the development of key infrastructures in the region, direct the Commissioners for environment and Attorneys General of the states to meet on climate issues affecting the states, commit to work with and support each other for the purpose of improving the well-being and welfare of the people of the south-south.

He also noted that the Council has mandated the Director General of the Commission to take adequate steps to implement all the decisions that have been reached.

Recall that the BRACED Commission was established in 2010 under Article 14 of the BRACED Agreement, with the sole mandate to coordinate and drive the south-south's aspiration for a common economic destiny through economic cooperation and integration.

Violet Osatohanmwen Obamwonyi

Edo State Govt Intensifies Sensitisation on VAPP Law to End Gender-Based Violence



Due to increase in the incidence of Gender-Based Violence (GBV), the Edo State Ministry of Social Development and Gender Issues has engaged with leaders and residents of Owan East and Esan Central Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Edo State, to sensitise them on the provisions of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Law, as a way to end the menace of GBV in the State.

The one-day awareness campaign tagged, 'Unite, Invest to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls' held at the Owan East Local Government Council Secretariat in Afuze and Esan Central Local Government Council Secretariat in Irrua, featuring sensitization on the provisions of the VAPP Law across the state. Speaking at the advocacy and sensitization programme, the Commissioner for Social Development and Gender Issues, Mrs. Christabel Omoh Ekwu, said the campaigns are aimed at accelerating the elimination of violence against persons and other related ills in the state.

According to Ekwu, "We have convened this meeting to raise awareness and to tell you about the efforts the Governor Godwin Obaseki-led administration is putting into the legal framework of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Law in order to effectively address social ills across the State. I am pleased to inform you that the VAPP Law is available to the general public, it is very clear and simple."

Hon. Ekwu enlightened the people on the need to report any related crimes at the earliest opportunity, adding that fighting gender-based violence is a collective responsibility of the government and the people. "We have a responsibility to protect our women and our children against all forms of molestation. I am appealing to parents and all relevant stakeholders not to hide evidences by promptly reporting any issue of defilement and rape immediately to the Ministry of Social Development and Gender Issues or to the nearest primary health care centre in order to establish evidence for appropriate application of the provision of the law," Ekwu added.

Responding, the Chairman of Esan Central Local Government Council, Hon. Paul Iyona, decried all forms of gender-based violence. He added that the VAPP Law will be implemented in the Local Government.

On his part, the Chairman of Owan East local Government Council, Hon. Aminu kadiiri Okodo, pledged his support to bring perpetrators of gender-based violence to book, encouraging those involved in such act to desist from it as the law will take its due course when they are caught.

Traditional and religious leaders, market women as well as youths present at the event were urged to be committed to the campaign in order to make the society free from all forms of gender-based violence.

Oginni Joy Kehinde

Desist From Barbaric Traditions – Hon. Ekwu

... Edo Govt frowns with grave legal implications



In continuation of the 16 Days of Activism, the Edo State Government through the Ministry of Social Development and Gender Issues in collaboration with Brave Heart Initiative and Josemaria Escriva Foundation, embarked on a sensitisation exercise to crusade against harmful traditional practices, such as Sky Burial in some parts of the State.

The Commissioner for Social Development and Gender Issues, Hon. Christabel Omoh Ekwu, explained that sky burial is a kind of burial that is accorded a person whom the traditions of the land has alleged to be a witch or wizard. According to her, at the death of such person, the corpse would be disposed in a hole or in the bush considered to be an evil forest. Hon. Ekwu described such practices as barbaric and inhuman, adding that no one wished to be thrown away at death. She educated the people on the health implications of sky burial as bush animals feed on such ill-disposed bodies, since they are not properly buried beneath the ground.

"We eat bush meat and most of this bush animals will feed on the ill-disposed dead bodies which is not healthy for us. What about stream water? Rain can also wash remnant of dead persons into our stream; making the water unhealthy to use." Hon. Ekwu noted.

The Commissioner advised those involved in such inhumane practices to totally desist from such, as the State Government will leave no stone unturned to bring perpetrators to book.

On his part, the Commissioner for Local Government, Community and Chieftancy Affairs, Hon. Monday Osaigbovo, described Edo State as one with good cultures and interesting traditions, adding that culture is for the interest of the people and not the people's interest for culture.

Hon. Osaigbovo emphasised on the need to discontinue traditional practices that infringe on the rights of individuals, citing sky burial, child marriage and female genital mutilation (circumcision). He decried such practices as according to him, they create bad image of Edo State and its people.

The Attorney General of Edo State, Dr. Oluwole Uzzi (Esq), who was represented by Mrs. Laureta Asaka, enlighten the people on the legal implications of sky burial and other harmful traditional practices, with the admonition for perpetrators to retrace their steps.

Also, the Chairman of Akoko Edo Local Government Area (LGA) of Edo State, Mr. Tajudeen Suleiman, encouraged the people to adhere to the principles guiding cultural practices in the State.

Responding on behalf of the Traditional Rulers in Akoko Edo LGA, the Okogbe of Ojah, Chief Daniel Suru Lawani, appreciated the Government for its unwavering efforts toward the elimination of harmful traditional practices, promising to abide strictly by the State Government's policy on traditions and cultural practices. Highpoint of the event was a stakeholder engagement, which featured campaign with the distribution of flyers and sensitisation on the need to stop the practices of sky burial and other harmful cultural practices as well as its implications in Akoko Edo LGA.

Oginni Joy Kehinde



Obaseki to Rebuild Idia College to Global Standard, Sets up Governance Management Mechanism



Governor Godwin Obaseki, has pledged to restore the lost glory of Idia College, Benin, and rebuild the historic school to a world-class standard. The Governor made this commitment in a recent meeting with the executives and members of the school's alumni, who were on a courtesy visit to the Governor on the occasion of the school's 50th anniversary celebration, at the Edo State Government House, in Benin City.

While congratulating the association on the school's golden jubilee, the Governor commended the alumni body for taking up the responsibility of joining the government to rebuild their alma mater. According to Obaseki, "I want to plead with you, that we should not go for half measures. Let us build the kind of school that produced you. We are not doing anything new. We are just reenacting who we are. "I am passionate about Idia college. I believe in the dream of our late Governor and father, General Ogbemudia, and the emphasis on girl child education."

Obaseki further emphasized proper governance and management of the school to ensure the sustainability of its restoration. He said: "Institutions are about governance. You could build all the fancy stuff, but once there is no sense of ownership that drives governance, then we will go back to where we are coming from. So, I am glad that we have a group that has now accepted the responsibility of co-governing the school. I now, as a Governor, have the sense that whatever we put in place now, somebody is going to be there to co-monitor with you.

"I have made up my mind to rebuild Idia College before I leave; but rebuilding Idia College is not just about infrastructure, it is more about the governance and management of the school, which cannot be left exclusively to the government. So, the ministry has my mandate. I have pushed, I have put money in the budget, and we are ready to go."

"I do not want to cry over spilled milk, because I know what that school was. What you see in your school is representative of what happened to education before we came to government. We need a new master plan for the school. In terms of the physical infrastructure, we know that we need to reinvest in that school, but we have to be clear what the next 50 years holds for that school, what it will be, so that we are very clear as to what we are doing with it. Once we are clear about the objective, then we can begin to walk through it, and I will support."

On her part, the Global President of the alumni body, Adesuwa Onyenokwe, appreciated the Governor for his reception, and for his assurance that the school will be rebuilt to global standard.

She said: "Our dreams are tied with yours. Our dream is to have a school, where at the end of the day, the best girls across the region will have the opportunity to have a kind of education where the best minds are, and the top students will have the opportunity to be in the boarding school where they have all the facilities that they require.

"You are birthing another model school exactly 50 years after. That is definitely auspicious. So, the next 50 years begins next year. As you leave, you are handing over to us, to the government, and to Edo State, a girls' school that is comparable to any school anywhere in the world."

Nosakhare Agbonigiarhuoyi

Obaseki Charges Newly Sworn-in Special Advisers to Set Narratives Right

...says over 400,000 children receive quality education in Edo



Edo State Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki, has charged the newly sworn-in Special Advisers to accurately portray the narratives about his administration's achievements and milestones for the past seven years. He highlighted the need to counter the opposition's distorted narratives while pledging commitment to a free and fair electoral process in Edo State, come 2024. The Governor gave this charge on Wednesday December 13th 2023, during the swearing-in ceremony of 12 new Special Advisers (political), which held at the Edo State Government House, in Benin City.

According to Obaseki, "I have the pleasure to congratulate and welcome my 12 political disciples. There is no Judas among them because I know of all them. Some of them have served as political advisers, so we are just renewing their term. And we have nine new political advisers, each responsible for a federal constituency in Edo State. "Over the last seven years, we have discharged our duty creditably to the people of Edo State. We have on record accomplished every goal, every project we set out to do. You cannot accuse us or tell us that we have failed. I think your goal is to set the narratives right. As a party and as a government, we cannot solve every problem. Government or Edo State would not end with this administration, it will continue.

"So the first charge is that you must go out there and put paid to the narratives of the opposition. Paint the proper perspective and tell Edo people that we have constructed almost 1500 kilometers of road in the last seven years and we can show them all the roads we have completed and they are still there. They cannot build roads, so they now want to blame us for the roads they did not build."

Reflecting on the past seven years, the Governor highlighted some of his administration's achievements, while restating his unwavering determination to consolidate on the milestones so far recorded, to better the lives of citizens and residents of the state. Obaseki said: "We want to tell Edo people in our various constituencies, how we have cared for them; how we have cared for their children. We have over 400,000 children in our care receiving quality education. You must go and see them, ensure that you verify. In all your constituencies, we have revamped the health care system. We have given our citizens health insurance so that they can cheaply access healthcare.

"We have done what no government in Africa has done, whether at the federal or subnational level. We have connected every part of the state with fiber optics. That means we have prepared Edo for the next industrial revolution. Almost 100,000 hectares of new land under cultivation in seven years is a feat many national governments cannot achieve."

"Our people need to know. We need to tell the world, but have waited till now to complete what we have set out to do, so that we would have evidence. So, our politics is a politics of truth, where we say we did something and we can show you what we did. It is not a politics of lies where people create phantoms and want people to believe and accept the lies, they are selling to them", Obaseki added. In her vote of thanks on behalf of the newly sworn in Special Advisers, Dr. Philomena Ihenyen, one of the new appointees, thanked the Governor for the opportunity given to her and fellow advisers to serve, while pledging their full support to the Governor.

She said: "For these remaining few months to the end of your tenure, we are going work as we have never worked before. We will join you to finish well and by the 12th of November, when we are swearing in our new PDP Governor, we will be with you at the stadium. We are not just saying it because we want to say something; we are taking it as a challenge. We are going back home; you have done a perfect job by nominating members here to represent their different constituencies."

The newly appointed advisers are: Lady Uwa Osunbor, Special Adviser, Political; Dr. Philomena Ihenyen, Special Adviser, Political; Hon. Jimfred Obadiku, Special Adviser, Political, and Shedrack Ohionnua Udugbai, Special Adviser, Youth Affairs. The Special Advisers for the state's nine Federal Constituencies are: Philomena Balogun, Akoko-Edo; Hon. Ayuba Sedenu, Etsako East/West/Central; Abu Abdullahi, Owan West/East; Kenneth Edebiri, Orhionmwon/Uhunmwode; Osagie Ekunwe Melody, Egor/Ikpoba-Okha Federal Constituencies.

Others are: Victor Enoghama, Oredo; Mr. Kelvin Obarogie, Ovia South West/Ovia North East; Mr. Patrick Iluobe, Esan North-East/Esan South-East, and Mrs. Herberta Ayu, Esan Central/West/Igueben Federal Constituencies.

Violet Osatohanmwun Obamwonyi

UN-habitat Appointment: Uwadia's Emergence as Member Excites Gov Obaseki



Governor Godwin Obaseki has congratulated Hon. Daniel Uwadia on his appointment as a distinguished member of the UN-Habitat Stakeholder Advisory Group Enterprise (SAGE). In his congratulatory message, Governor Obaseki lauds Uwadia's unwavering dedication to advancing causes that champion environmental sustainability, emphasising that his appointment is a testament to his profound commitment and passion for such critical endeavours.

Governor Obaseki noted "You have indeed made the Government and the good people of Edo State proud, and we are confident that you will continue to bring your expertise to bear as a good ambassador of our dear State."

"We look forward to your invaluable contributions as we strengthen our collaborative efforts with the UN in ensuring a clean and green Edo, and promoting urban renewal, forest regeneration, as well as other novel initiatives we have embarked on as part of our Making Edo Great Again (MEGA) Agenda."

Hon. Uwadia stands as a beacon of youth empowerment and development, embodying exemplary leadership and serving as a mentor to countless individuals. His remarkable contributions and trailblazing achievements underscore his status as a dynamic and proactive political enthusiast, deeply invested in fostering positive change and progress within his community and beyond.

As a fervent advocate for global citizenship and youth empowerment, Hon. Uwadia has garnered widespread recognition, earning numerous accolades from student and youth communities.

His steadfast support for youth development and nation-building, coupled with his dedication to grassroots inclusion, epitomizes his unwavering commitment to nurturing the next generation of leaders and change-makers.

Hon. Uwadia's career spans impactful roles across various prestigious platforms. From serving in the Edo State Government to the National Assembly of Nigeria; and from the African Union to the Global Solutions Initiative in Berlin, his journey of influence and advocacy has now led him to the esteemed UN Habitat. Through his visionary leadership and proactive initiatives, Hon. Uwadia has played a pivotal role in catalyzing transformative change and fostering a more inclusive and empowered society.

His multifaceted approach to youth development and empowerment has not only inspired countless individuals but has also significantly contributed to the cultivation of a vibrant and resilient community. Hon. Uwadia's steadfast dedication to driving positive change serves as a testament to his exemplary leadership and unwavering commitment to building a better and more sustainable future for all.

In his new role as a member of SAGE at the UN Habitat, Hon. Uwadia will be fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholders. Participatory planning, as emphasized by SDG indicator 11.3.2, will be central to his initiatives, ensuring that the voices of civil societies are not only heard, but integrated into Urban planning and management strategies.

Wisdom Agbonta

Chinese Business Community Commends Gov Obaseki's EdoBEST 2.0 Program, Offers Scholarships to 20 Students, Rewards 5 Outstanding Teachers



The Chinese Business Community in Edo State has awarded scholarships to 20 secondary school students and recognized five outstanding teachers in the state, in demonstration of their support for the laudable education initiatives of the Governor Godwin Obaseki-led administration, particularly the introduction of digital teaching and learning models into secondary education in Edo State, through the EdoBEST 2.0 program.

The event which held on Tuesday 16th January 2024, at Imaguero Girls College in Benin, had in attendance the Edo State Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki, Edo State First Lady, Mrs. Besty Obaseki, Edo State Commissioner for Education, Dr. Joan Osa Oviawe, the Consul General of the People's Republic of China in Lagos, members of the Chinese Business Community, amongst others.

Speaking on behalf of Edo State Government, the Edo State Commissioner for Education, Dr. Joan Oviawe, ascribed the kind gestures by the Chinese Business Community to the reforms of the current administration, under the leadership of Governor Godwin Obaseki.

According to Oviawe, "What you are seeing here today is a demonstration of the commitment of the Chinese Business Community to students of Edo State in support of our education reforms also known as EdoBEST 2.0. Part of the initiative is introducing digital education to our secondary schools.

Oviawe noted that the EdoBEST 2.0 program has provided not just quality and accessible education to secondary school students but has also ensured that students in rural and semi-urban areas are at learning par with their urban counterparts, stating that Edo State Government has distributed tablets to both students and teachers in the state, to foster active learning and interactions among teachers and students, in its pilot phase of digital education in selected secondary schools in the state.

Oviawe said: "Consul General, it would interest you to know that since 2018, His Excellency, Governor Godwin Obaseki has provided all our basic school teachers with tablets, so they are able to teach in a synchronized manner across the state, whether they are in urban, rural or semi-urban schools. Part of the EdoBEST 2.0 initiative of His Excellency is that, for secondary

schools like the one we are in now, most teachers and the students have tablets. For the last six months we have been piloting digital education in some selected secondary schools, and Imaguero College happens to be one of these pilot schools.

"And what we have come to do with that digital education is to further enhance our pedagogy which is learner-centered, to aid active interactions between the teachers and the learners and active interactions between learners." Oviawe further thanked the Chinese Business Community for their support and commitment to education in the state.

On her part, the Consul General of the People's Republic of China in Lagos, Ms. Yan Yuqing, expressed delight over her visit to the state, noting that the aim of the donations was to empower education and support the EdoBEST program. She said: "As the 8th and first female Consul General, it is a great honor to be offering out scholarships to students of this school. This is particularly true because when we develop education, the country develops. I want to say that the students of Edo State are very lucky to have a Governor who has such a great commitment towards education.

"We have donated digital gadgets to support the ongoing digital education and we look forward to extending our partnership to friendship. To the outstanding teachers and students, I want to say congratulation. China is like a family and we want to promote shared future."

Offering a vote of thanks on behalf of the beneficiaries, the Senior Prefect of Imaguero Girls College, Ms. Joy Obonodi appreciated the Consul General and the Chinese Business Community in Edo State for the donations and awards. According to her, "The ongoing EdoBEST 2.0 has changed our lives in so many ways, exposing us to digital education. These tablets will create opportunities for me and my fellow students to learn more.

"Thank you, Governor Obaseki, for bringing investors into Edo State. Today we are beneficiaries of the Chinese partnership with Edo State. I have always aspired to be a computer engineer and now I feel very encouraged to continue the pursuit of my dream." Highlight of the event was the award of scholarships to 20 students and recognition of 5 outstanding teachers in Edo State.

Violet Osatohanmwun Obamwonyi

United Nigeria Airlines Commences Operation in Edo, as Gov Obaseki Takes Executive Chairman on Projects Tour

...reiterates commitment to seamless, convenient air transport system in the state

...seeks improved collaboration with federal authorities to close infrastructural gaps



Edo State Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki has reiterated his administration's commitment to improving air travels in the state. Obaseki made this known on the occasion of the inaugural flight by United Nigeria Airlines into the state, on 12th December 2023. Obaseki who was at the Benin Airport where he was received by the Executive Chairman of the airline, Prof Obiorah Okonkwo, noted that the investment drive by his administration has led to influx of investors, visitors and tourist into the state, hence the need for more airlines operators in the state.

With Edo as a viable investment, tourist and cultural destination, the number of airline operators in the state has now increased from just one, when Governor Obaseki assumed office, to eight. More airlines are expected to commence operation soon. According to Obaseki, "First, good morning to all of you who have come to witness this inaugural flight into Benin City. Let me remind you all; when I came into office in late 2016, there was only one commercial flight flying into Benin, one airline. Today, you have seven airlines. I believe United Nigeria Airlines is the eighth airline coming into Benin and I heard there is one other that we are expecting to commence operation soon.

"So, in seven years we have been able to attract seven new entrants into this marketplace and that has been made possible because of the openness and collaboration with the aviation authorities."

"I recall my meeting with the former Minister of Aviation, and the conversation at that time, where we said as a state, we are ready to collaborate with the federal government to increase the traffic flow into Edo State. Benin City is perhaps one of the most strategically located cities in the country, being a gateway and an access point between the eastern part of the country, the west, the south-south, and the north".

Obaseki while highlighting some of the feats so far attained in aiding the aviation sector's operation in the state, ruminated on the harmonious relationship the state has developed with the aviation authorities, in ensuring a seamless and convenient air transportation in and out of the state. Obaseki said: "So, in terms of the traffic flow, we thought we had to do something to ensure that we make Edo State a hub. And what did we do? At that meeting, the issues were raised; the issues we felt we could support the federal government on; issues of securing the airport, for instance. We built control towers, security posts across the airport for security officers to be able to patrol and stay overnight.

On the issue of lighting the airport, we worked with the government at that point in time and made a bit of capital contributions to improve the lighting system so that we could extend the flying hours. "There was the issue of the ILS; the landing instruments, and with pressure from us, and the Minister at that time was very kind, they came in here and help install landing instruments. So, the Benin airport was able to attract enough of the requisite equipment for airlines to be able to come in and out of this state. A few issues still need to be cleared, which we are working on.

"What have all of these done? All of these have made the Benin Airport move from, I believe, an airport that was about sixth or eighth in terms of traffic in the country, to, I believe, number three or four in terms of traffic flow in the country".

The Governor who stressed that the airport can be further improved upon for maximum utilization, noted that there are ongoing conversations with the aviation authorities on how the state government can render more support to make the airport a lot more efficient. Obaseki emphasized the state government's desire to reduce discomfort and inconvenience for citizens and other passengers flying in and out of the state, noting it as a reason for attracting more airline operators, while assuring them of the support and cooperation of the government of Edo State.

The Governor further led the Executive Chairman and members of his team on a guided tour of some projects executed by his administration in the state, stressing that the essence of governance is to improve the lives and well-being of the people. While acknowledging the presence of diverse ideas, Obaseki laid emphasis on a leader's responsibility to navigate the variations and understand how resources can be unified to address the competing needs and desires of the populace.

Visiting the Benin City Mall currently near completion, Sir Victor Uwaifo Creative Hub and Sound Stage, and the John Odigie Oyegun Public Service Academy (JOOPSA), the Governor noted that it was crucial for the airline to witness firsthand, the infrastructures and reforms by his administration, geared towards increasing traffic flow and mitigating the risks of conducting business in the state.

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EDSG Trains Staff as Professional Project Managers



The Edo State Government through the John Odigie Oyegun Public Service Academy (JOOPSA) has reenforced its commitment to train and equip civil and public servants in the State with the necessary skills and technical know-how to deliver professional services to the public.

During the three-day Project Management training sessions, Mr. Paul Omugbe the resource person established the essence and benefits of having an effective and in-depth analysis on the topics – Understanding Project Management, and Adopting Project Management (Predictive Approach) – which climaxed with elaborate questions and answers session, where participants' questions were satisfactorily answered with relatable instances.

He emphasized that "any individual who plans and executes an event, seats for an examination, goes shopping, or does anything at all that is planned for, is a project manager. Still, most people don't know because they aren't certified". He further pointed out that only professionals are certified, and as civil and public servants, we must plan and ensure that we are all certified.

The participants were divided into groups for a hands-on exercise, where they created simulations of a project, using the project management skills and knowledge to proffer lasting solutions to such projects. The best group was awarded a 70% scholarship to pursue an online course in Professional Project management with the Project Management Institute (PMI), while other groups were given 20% scholarships.

Mr. Paul Omugbe is a Project Manager, Chartered Accountant, Financial Modeling Analyst, and Business Advisor. He holds a bachelor's degree in applied accounting from Oxford Brookes University and a diploma in accounting from the University of Benin (UNIBEN). Mr. Omugbe is the immediate past President of the Project Management Institute (PMI), Nigeria Chapter, and the former president of Project Management Professionals, Nigeria.

Sharing their experiences, some participants at the Project management training, one of which is Engr. Adedio Aleakhua Abdulrazak expressed the impactfulness of the training, and applauded the presentations, describing them as detailed and self-explanatory, he added that he looks forward to more sessions of such. Another participant, Mrs. Esohe Grace, thanked the facilitators and the resource person for doing a good job in explaining project management, especially the feedback from various group presentations, they were very insightful." The facilitators are awesome", she added.

The Project Management training had participants drawn from every Ministry, Department, and Agency in the State's civil and public service.

Igbavboa Samuel Omokheoa

Gov Obaseki Gets Commendation on Education Transformation, Youth Dev't in Edo, Receives Old Boys and Girls Alumni of Govt Primary School



The President of the Association of Old Boys and Girls of Government Primary School, Benin, Chief Percy Okojie, and other members of the body, have commended the Edo State Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki, for championing education transformation programs and youth development in the state, ensuring pupils and students in the state have access to quality education.

Okojie who gave this commendation on Friday 1st December 2023, during a courtesy visit to the Governor by executive and members of the alumni body, at the Edo State Government House in Benin, expressed satisfaction with the developmental strides of the Obaseki-led administration in transforming the educational sector of the state and creating the enabling environment to drive creativity and innovations among Edo youths.

He said: "Your Excellency, these are old boys and girls of Government Primary School. The school is now at Country Home Road just by Stella Obasanjo. We the proud alumni of Government Primary School, the foremost and oldest primary school established in 1901 in Benin City, are pleased to meet you and your team today, as part of the event marking our first-ever reunion celebration.

"As members of the Old Boys and Girls Association of this noble and historic school, who have shared a strong bond of connection and friendship for over 6 decades, and are desirous of bequeathing a lasting legacy of solid educational foundation for our young ones and the future generations.

"The purpose of our courtesy visit Your Excellency, is to express our heartfelt appreciation for your dedicated service to our state and your commitment to the welfare of public education and the progress of our young ones in our community."

Okojie also noted that the alumni body was on the visit to discuss and explore opportunities for collaboration between the association and the state in the areas of public education, and also to share and present some projects and initiatives that the alumni body intends to undertake for the betterment of their alma mater and public education in the state, as well as other initiatives that align with the Governor's vision for the state.

He also presented before the Governor, some of the challenges faced by his alma mater, soliciting the

state government's intervention in revamping the school. In his address, the Edo State Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki congratulated members of the alumni body for being part of such a historic school, noting that the school is part of Edo cultural districts, earmarked to drive the cultural and historical records of the state to future generations and international communities.

Obaseki said: "First, I want to welcome and congratulate members of the old boys and girls of Government Primary School, Benin City, the first school to be established in Edo South. This school was established, I believe, four years after the expedition of 1897. And so, it is quite a historic school. "This was the first school and anybody who was educated in Edo and the Benin premises had to go to the school. I believe this was the only government primary school and Edo College was the only government secondary school until the 60s or even the 70s.

"This school is part of our cultural districts. We are now beginning to document; essentially, we are beginning to put Edo State within the historical context. So, whether it is the return of the artifacts, the design of a cultural center, these are all things we are trying to do to tell our story for people to know who we are, what happened, and why we are where we are today and what we need to do."

"The history of your school does not start from the 70s or 60s. This is a school that is more than a century old. So how to make that connection and tell the story should be one of the key challenges of your association. We will work with you on your project; to go into colonial records, colonial archives, to see how we can build history on this school."

Obaseki further highlighted the gains of educational reforms implemented so far in the state, noting that while the state government is committed to revamping the basic education system in the state, key priorities are also made to ensure efficiency and modernization in the technical and vocational educational system, in a bid to equipping students with technical skills, to enable them compete in any field of endeavor they find themselves.

Godspower Eguasa

EDSG Hosts Year-End Appraisal Workshop for Staff Members



The Edo State government through the Directorate of Corporate Change Communication and Performance Management Office (Transformation Office), has recently organized its year-end appraisal workshop for staff members in Benin City. Welcoming all Permanent Secretaries, Heads of Agencies, Departments and other officials to the Individual Appraisal Workshop which held at the Festival Hall within the Government House premises, the Head of Service, Dr. Anthony Okungbowa Esq. expressed his appreciation to the Permanent Secretary, Transformation Office, and her team for organizing the program.

According to him, "Individual appraisal is to enable us as Civil/Public Servants to know how much we put into our work and at the same time, improve our goals and targets and make recovery plans where necessary". Stating that the primary objective of the exercise is to elevate the service to a top-class level, The Head of Service underscored that the workshop aims to better and strategically position staff and subsequently cascade the acquired knowledge to other officers in various Ministries, Departments and Agencies across the State.

The Permanent Secretary, Transformation Office, Dr. Mrs. Joy Iyen, provided insights into the workshop's agenda. The key issues covered included the significance of annual performance reviews, determining employee participation, strategies for engaging staff in performance reviews and feedback, and effective management of staff engagement and feedback. Dr. Mrs. Joy Iyen highlighted that performance reviews are individual and one-on-one events, emphasizing confidentiality between supervisors and subordinates for efficient task delivery and increased productivity.

The workshop was also aimed at addressing root causes of poor performances and the art of handling difficult feedback. Dr. Iyen stressed the importance of staff assisting their colleagues for overall performance improvement and advocating for a professional approach to handling challenging tasks while cautioning against assigning unattainable tasks. The Permanent Secretary also urged staff to pay attention to their tasks and responsibilities, emphasizing the importance of accurate recording on the performance appraisal system when necessary.

A detailed navigation of the End of Year Appraisal using the E'Gov system was conducted by a representative from the Green Zone, Mr. Prince while guiding participants through modules such as performance assessment, and annual performance rating. During the interactive session, Mr. Akin Ojo of the Strategy, Policy, Projects, and Performance Management Office, highlighted the importance of planning, setting goals and targets for the new year, 2024. He emphasized that staff when committed to accountability and responsibility, can navigate a clearer roadmap to achieve their goals. Present at the workshop were representatives from Ministries, Departments, and Agencies, including Permanent Secretaries, Directors, and senior staff members, across the State's Civil/Public Service.

Omoruyi Patricia Osayomore

Post Covid-19 Economic Recovery: 1,713 Beneficiaries Receive NG-CARES Grants



The Edo State arm of the Nigeria Covid-19 Action Recovery and Economic Stimulus (NG-CARES) in collaboration with the Edo State Government, Bank of Industry and the World Bank, has provided support to 1,713 beneficiaries in the year 2023, which include traders, business owners, employers of labour, and youths in the State.

The NG-CARES' grants given through the Bank of Industry is to support youths in the micro small and medium businesses in the state to upscale their activities, venture into the tech ecosystem and improve their livelihoods, which in turn would boost economic growth in the state.

In her address, the State Chairman of NG-CARES and Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Youth and Humanitarian Affairs, Mrs. Ifueko Alufokhai, stated that the programme is focused on the protection of livelihoods & the empowerment of poor and vulnerable households with necessary supports from the post Covid-19 Economic Recovery Plan, emphasizing that it was necessary to cushion the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on businesses in the State.

Mrs. Alufokhai said: "A sustainable post Covid-19 economy should be supported by programmes targeted at viable businesses, sustaining livelihoods and improving our economy for global competitiveness".

The Edojobs Managing Director, Mrs. Anita Eribo, appreciated the Governor of Edo State, Mr. Godwin Obaseki, for his visionary leadership and support to small business owners in the state, by creating an enabling environment for them to thrive. She encouraged the beneficiaries to use the resources gained from the programme appropriately, adding that the state government will follow up with visits to ensure that grants received are judiciously utilized.

Describing the multiplier effect of the interventions, the Edojobs Boss said: "This thing is a tree. You get some form of support, you begin to do things better, you employ more staff, your business grows and you get people off the street".

The State Champion of NG-CARES (Edo State Result 3) and representative of the Bank of Industry, Mr. Akan Ekure, also appreciated Edo State Government, for being the easiest of all the south-south states he has worked with, in terms of business transactions, due to the smooth processes and structures put in place by the state government.

The Head of Entrepreneurship Development EdoJobs, Mr Segun Majekodunmi revealed that the exercise began seven months ago with over 12,000 applications, screened over 1,700 beneficiaries, who have been enumerated, verified and scheduled to go through series of trainings, covering various areas including business finance, management, amongst others, to prepare them with required skills and capacity to manage the grants that will accrue to them.

Among the beneficiaries, Mrs. Gideon said she has gained valuable insights to make her business grow, and add to the knowledge she already has; Mr. Tejiri thanked the Coordinator of the NG-CARES programme, who coached them on how to increase their knowledge on small businesses in order to perform better; while Ms. Zainab Zuberu, who had applied last year and did not get a chance but became successful on the current application, expressed delight and appreciation for the initiative facilitated by NG-CARES and its stakeholders.

Beneficiaries who received the grants were of two categories. DLI 3.2 received cash grants to invest in their businesses as they fall under small business owners and medium enterprises who employ labour. DLI 3.3 received laptops to kickstart their careers in tech and related areas, to provide solution-based products that the state and nation can benefit from.

Osaigbovo Frank Okundia



My Greatest Legacy Will Be the Benin City and Edo State Regional Master Plans – Obaseki

...prompts new trainees to own, drive plans, ensure sustainability



Governor Godwin Obaseki has said that his greatest legacy will be the Benin City and the Edo State Regional Master Plans. The Governor made this remark during a meeting with the Edo Clean and Green (Grow 100) initiative trainees, at the Edo State Civil Service Secretariat Complex, in Benin City.

In his remarks, Obaseki stressed the need to have a planned environment, while charging the young trainees to ensure its sustainability. He said: “I am glad that we are beginning to understand that nobody is going to plan for us. If we do not do it ourselves, it is not going to happen. Therefore, this whole tendency of always lamenting that something is not happening is just an exercise in futility.

“Edo state has about 5 million people, and 70 percent of these people have gone into urban areas. So, Edo is very urbanized. What is difficult for us is that, first, we did not anticipate and plan for it. So, you come into a city like Benin, and you are struggling to understand why things are where they are.”

Obaseki continued: “Where we find ourselves today is not one the people deliberately created. They just got overwhelmed or they just did not know enough. The next several decades are going to be challenging ones; challenging because, we have to make sense out of the situation we find ourselves; and as we are doing that, we are now dealing with an even much greater challenge of climate change.”

Speaking on the transparent nature of the current civil service in the state, Obaseki remarked that the new trainees were hired purely on merit, and as such, should owe their loyalty to God and their professional cause alone, to benefit the larger society, while prompting them to own and drive the master plans.

He said: “The process by which you came in was organized the way it was, so that the system is driven by merit for the benefit of a larger whole. The lesson to take from the recruitment process is that you came on your own merit. “Having been hired because you were considered good enough, you therefore do not owe anybody any favours except God; to do His will. He gave you that job for a purpose; to take care of a larger society.

So, your loyalty cannot be to any individual. It should be to your professional cause and to your God; to always do what you believe is right when it is right.”

“My greatest legacy is going to be the master plans. It is that compass of where we should be going. I want you to co-create it. That is why we have not taken it and launched it. You will launch it, you will own it, and you will put your all into it, to make sure it sets the pathway by which our society is going to grow and evolve, over the next several decades.”

On her part, the Edo State Commissioner for Physical Planning, Housing, Urban and Regional Development, Isoken Omo, commended the Governor for the initiative. In her remarks, she said: “Your Excellency, this is the first time in our history where we intend to bring people into the civil service, but before really engaging them, we want to train them, and this is as a result of all the transformation that have been going on.

“This process, of course, will cost a lot more, but in the end, it will yield a better result; because by the time these people get into the system, they are coming into a system that has a structure and they are getting into a culture that they have taken one year to learn.”

Appreciating the Governor for the merit-based system of employment into the service and the advantages of the training exercise, one of the trainees, Ivie Asemota Enehizena, noted that through the initiative, the trainees would become the properly groomed embryo that would fit and function perfectly in the civil service.

“Part of the things that we have learnt are the laws governing the Ministry of Physical planning, which cuts across the administration, the Land Use Act, the Edo State Development and Building Control Law, and the Environment Protection Law”, Enehizena added.

Nosakhare Agbonigiarhuoyi

SSAs in Ovia North East Show Solidarity in Support of MEGA Agenda



The Commissioner for Local Government, Community & Chieftaincy Affairs, Hon. Monday Osiagbovo (JP) has applauded Senior Special Assistants (SSAs) from Ovia North-East Local Government in the State for their continuous commitment to supporting the Governor Obaseki's Making Edo Great Again (MEGA) agenda.

Hon. Monday Osiagbovo who made this commendation during the monthly meeting with the SSAs held in his office in Benin City, affirmed Government's commitment in the support of initiatives that would positively impact communities in the State, emphasizing the importance of effective governance at the grassroots level and acknowledging that collaboration between all parties is crucial in achieving the goals of government.

He opined that the Governor's commitment to development in the State is evident as he is creating a conducive environment for businesses to thrive and for investors to harness the rich business potentials of the State, putting Edo on the world map.

The Leader, who spoke on behalf of the Senior Special Assistants (SSAs), Ovia North East Local Government, Hon. Obasogie Julius, cast a vote of confidence on the Governor and appreciated his dedication to the welfare of the people. He emphasized the importance of a united front when it comes to providing efficient and effective governance.

He further expressed his team's unwavering support and solidarity to the Governor Obaseki led-administration in Making Edo Great Again and finishing strong.

The monthly regular follow-up meetings with the Commissioner for Local Government, Community & Chieftaincy Affairs is to review situations in the Local Government, brainstorm on collaborative initiatives and new strategies.

Daniel-Nwosu Nohunwan Lucy

EDSG Commends Traditional Rulers, Security Agencies and Other Stakeholders for Maintaining Peace, Security in Akoko Edo



The menace of human trafficking and irregular migration has become a global epidemic, severely affecting the economies of many nations, particularly those in Africa. Traffickers take advantage of young people in search of greener pastures, subjecting them to various forms of exploitation, forced labor, abuse, and trafficking.

The surge of this menace has been linked to lack of critical attention by both government and non-governmental bodies in arresting the ill, hence its continued threat to lives, especially those of young persons in the society.

Prior to Governor Godwin Obaseki's administration, Edo State topped the list of states with high cases of human trafficking and irregular migration. A high number of Edo youths were unable to nurture their productive and creative skills because the enabling and right environment was absent, and therefore saw migration as their last option; an endeavor they were dogged to undertake despite the harrowing conditions surrounding it.

International donors lacked trust in the government due to the absence of a legal and institutional framework that guarantees the security of funds, mission, and core objectives needed to foster collaboration in combatting the menace.

This narrative changed as soon as Governor Godwin Obaseki assumed office in 2016. He recognized the lingering bad economic environment in the country, which is one of the push factors aiding the surge, and established the Edo State Taskforce Against Human Trafficking (ETAHT), an agency established by law to attend strictly to the issues of human trafficking and irregular migration in the state.

Over 5,000 returnees have been rehabilitated and reintegrated since the inception of ETAHT. Some of the returnees have received up to 5 million worth of reintegration packages.

The Governor intensified the fight when he launched the Managing Migration through Development Project (MMDP), a project that has transformed the lives of several youths in Edo.

The approach adopted by Governor Godwin Obaseki in managing migration through development, holistically tackles human trafficking and irregular migration, as it involves bringing development to the different areas and interiors of the state, and addressing grey areas and concerns as they relate to youth empowerment, in order to drive productivity, inclusiveness, and community development.

A lot has been achieved economically, flowing from the establishment of EdoJobs centers across the three senatorial districts of the state, which has accelerated human capital development, youth empowerment programs on skill acquisition, and community development. The rehabilitation of Primary Healthcare Centres across the state also addresses the medical and healthcare concerns.

Through these interventions, youths in the state are now enthused to nurture their talents, creative and productive skills to earn a living, rather than take solace in migration. The Obaseki administration has changed a negative global narrative about Edo in terms of human trafficking and irregular migration and has created the enabling environment to spur creativity and productivity among youths in the state.

Daniel-Nwosu Nohunwan Lucy

Edo State Govt Empowers Rural Youths, Students on Solar Panel Installation Techniques



The Ministry of Digital Economy, Science and Technology in collaboration with EdoJobs and GIZ (German Agency for International Cooperation) has trained and empowered rural youths and students in solar panel installation techniques at the Edo State Polytechnic in Usen and Sobodida-Ora.

The Commissioner for Digital Economy, Science, and Technology, Hon. Ogbede Ifaluyi-isibor, during his opening remark at the graduation/empowerment ceremony, said the Edo State Government is committed to the welfare and growth of the youth in rural areas and will continue to look out for them.

Hon. Ifaluyi Isibor added that after a very successful and rigorous training, a few weeks ago, beneficiaries were presented with solar panel installation starter packs and kits that would help them create jobs for themselves and make them self sufficient. As a ministry, we believe that government must be centered on the people and that their overall wellbeing must be its primary concern", he said.

The Head of Socials, Owan West Local Government, Mr. Humphrey Izedonmwen, expressed joy while appreciating Edo State Government for the empowerment program. He added that several transactions had been carried out in the local government, but none was as rich and productive.

Speaking on behalf of the beneficiaries, Mr. Akeem Emmanuel appreciated Edo State Government for the knowledge and skills bequeathed them, adding that the kits and tools provided would enable them become effective and efficient in their vocation and ultimately enable them become productive members of society.

High point of the ceremony was the presentation of starter packs and kits to all the beneficiaries.

Efese Osayekemwen Jim

Gov Obaseki Boosting Creative Skills, Nurturing Young Talents, Securing Edo's Future

...as Shallipopi hosts homecoming show at Victor Uwaifo Creative Hub and Soundstage



Not until Governor Godwin Obaseki assumed office in 2016, Edo State, often hailed as Nigeria's artistic and cultural nucleus, experienced a decline in its creative prowess. The entertainment industry suffered neglect, prompting young talents in the state to seek opportunities elsewhere, feeling unappreciated in their homeland.

The Obaseki administration however birthed the MEGA agenda, with a focus on reviving Edo's lost glory. Central to this agenda was the rejuvenation of arts, culture, and tourism, marking a pivotal moment for the state's creative landscape.

Under this vision, Governor Obaseki championed various youth-centred initiatives within the creative sector, equipping young talents with essential tools, resources, and platforms to nurture their abilities. A prominent stride in this endeavor was the establishment of the world-class Victor Uwaifo Creative Hub and soundstage, empowering artists and filmmakers alike.

The recent Homecoming Concert hosted by Shallipopi at the Sir Victor Uwaifo Creative Hub in Benin City, on December 29th 2023, stands as a testament to this commitment.

Speaking at the Homecoming concert, the Governor highlighted the pivotal role of Edo youths in driving Africa's creative engine, emphasizing the need for platforms which will aid young talents in the state to showcase their innate skills and abilities, ensuring a vibrant future for the state.

Asserting Edo's reinvigorated stance as a hub for top-tier artists, Governor Obaseki lauded Shallipopi's success as a beacon of inspiration for upcoming artists in the state, emphasizing the potential in the streets of Edo.

According to Obaseki: "I want to let young people know that Edo is back and they do not have to leave Edo to get the best in the world. Some of the best artists today in Nigeria and Africa are coming from Edo."

"This is Shallipopi; he is perhaps Nigeria's number one artist today and he is from Edo. Imagine how many more Shallipopis are out here in the streets of Edo. So for us tonight, he is here as an inspiration and to encourage a lot of young people in Edo, to make them know that they too can make it."

Thanking the Governor for his hospitality and commitment to boosting the creative industry in the state, Crown Uzama, professionally known as Shallipopi, expressed his excitement being home, assuring fans of a great show ahead. According to him, "I feel great and excited. It is going to be a shutdown; go get your ticket and let us party."

The Governor's dedication to youth empowerment and creative talent is evident through initiatives pioneered by his administration, including the Edo Film Festival, Enina Theatre Festival, Edo Youth Concerts, and the Edo State Gospel Art and Creative Festival/Award (EdoGoF), among others.

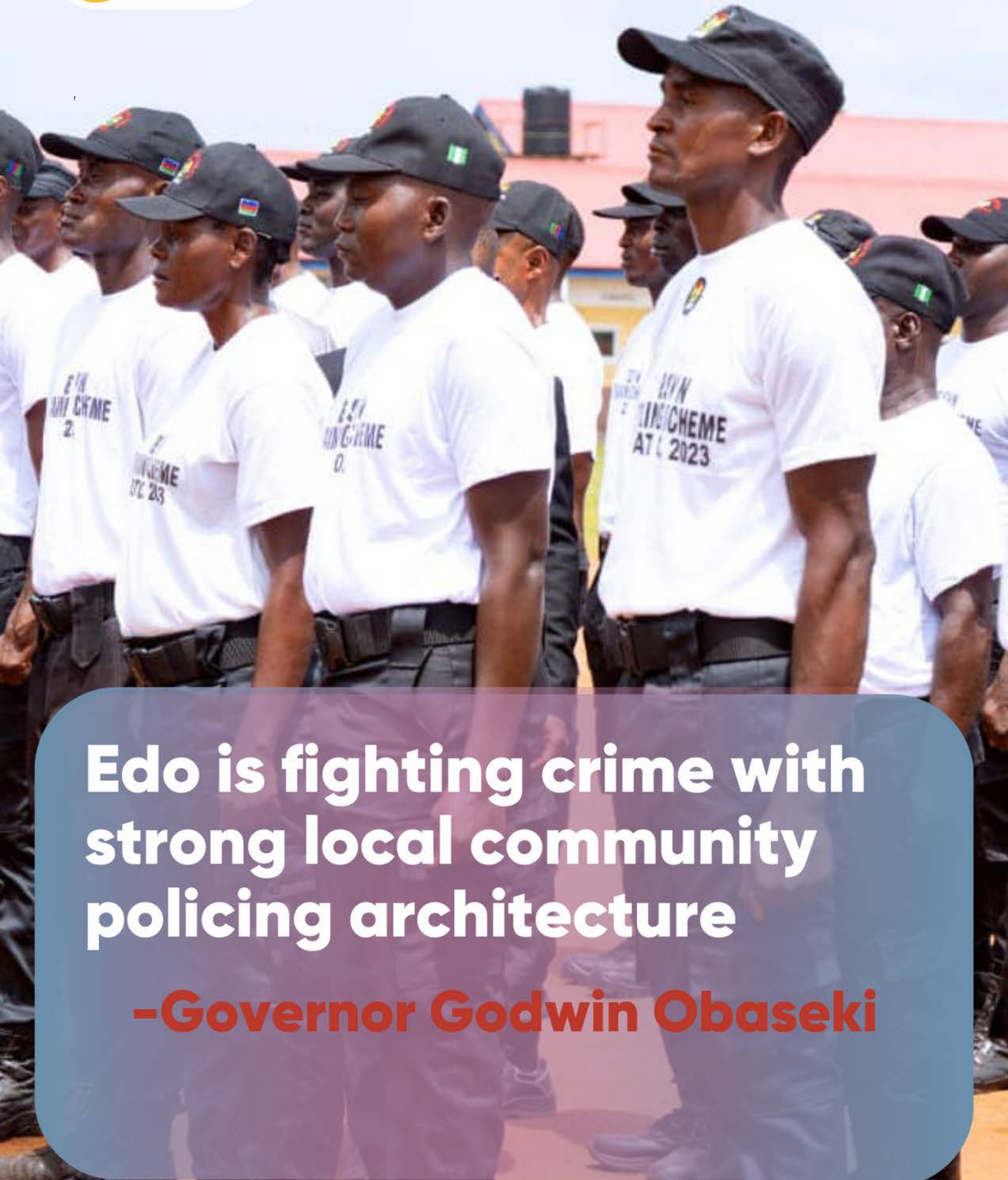
Recent events hosted by acclaimed artists like Johnny Drille and Porcupine at the Victor Uwaifo Creative Hub and Soundstage further underscore Edo's artistic resurgence under Governor Godwin Obaseki's watch.

Violet Osatohanmwen Obamwonyi





EDO
STATE
GOVERNMENT



**Edo is fighting crime with
strong local community
policing architecture**

-Governor Godwin Obaseki

Edo-CSDA Assesses Projects Across 20 Benefitting Communities



As part of its responsibility to ensure transparency, accountability, standard and effective utilization of State's resources, the Edo State Community Social Development Agency (Edo-CSDA) has conducted a field visit to 20 communities in the state, to assess the progress of ongoing projects and to ascertain the extent of utilisation of allocated funds.

To effectively deliver on the oversight function, the Agency was accompanied on the evaluation exercise by experts from line Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) including Education, SUBEB, Roads and Bridges, Primary Healthcare Development Agency, Environment, Water Resources, State Care Coordinating Unit and a representative from the office of the Secretary to the State Government. The Team's responsibilities include, ascertaining the alignment of community projects with standards and requirements of their respective departments. At the core of the visit is to evaluate whether the financial resources provided correspond with the work accomplished on the ground.

Additionally, the Team aimed to verify adherence to prescribed guidelines and work plans while ensuring that the quality of work meets the standards set by Edo State Government. The Operations Manager and Leader of the Team, Barrister Imoudu Longe, explained that the Edo-CSDA adopts a World Bank-sanctioned vehicle known as "Community Driven Development" for implementation. According to him, "The essence of this approach is for the community to identify the project, select community members for implementation, design the project, contribute three percent of the project cost, and execute the project independently.

"The agency's role is to expedite the process, facilitate implementation, and ensure strict adherence to guidelines, work plans, and schedules. The purpose of the field visit is to assess whether the allocated funds align with the actual progress on the ground. The Team is tasked with verifying whether the communities are following the prescribed guidelines and work plans, and if the quality of work meets the standards set by the Edo State Government.

"To enhance the evaluation process, experts, serving as desk officers from line-MDAs are part of the Team. Their responsibilities include scrutinizing the projects in line with the standards and requirements of their respective departments"

He revealed that a detailed report will be written at the end of the assessment to determine whether the community has met the established standards, stating that the report will be crucial in deciding whether further funds would be allocated to sustain and advance the implementation of the projects.

Edo-CSDA had initiated micro-projects across 20 communities in 13 local government areas, which are being assessed. The projects encompass the construction and renovation of classrooms, staff quarters for primary health care centres and water schemes. As the state strives to execute sustainable and community-driven development projects, these proactive measures underscore the commitment to effective project management and the verifiable utilization of resources allocated for the betterment of local communities in the State.

Agbongiasede Gloria



Gov Obaseki Joins Fugar Community to Celebrate 5th Annual Festival, Donates N5m in Support



Edo State Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki, on Wednesday December 27 2023, joined the people of Fugar, in Etsako Central Local Government area of Edo State to celebrate their 5th Annual Cultural Festival.

Congratulating indigenes of Fugar and appreciating them for their support, the Governor noted that the festival serves as a means of portraying the cultural heritage of the people to the global community, and giving meaning to the people of Fugar.

Obaseki said: "You have been doing this for 5 years now. I believe this cultural festival will last for a very long time. I want to encourage you that every year, you must make sure that you celebrate this festival, because this festival is what gives meaning to you as Fugar people."

"Without this festival, nobody will know about Fugar, its tradition, beautiful culture, food, dress, language, and everything that has to do with Fugar. For us as government, any idea you come with, we are ready to support, so that Fugar can grow and be great again."

"I am glad that this year, you have taken time to also look at the economy. Now that things are difficult in Nigeria, it is good for you to look inwards and say, what can we do for ourselves; how can we make life better for our people by looking at ourselves and our culture?" Obaseki added.

The Governor further donated the sum of N5 million in support of the festival. "On behalf of the government and the ministry of culture, I will donate the sum of 5 million naira to support this festival", Obaseki pledged.

Nosakhare Agbonigiarhuoyi

Edo Records Over N50b Investments in Oil Palm, Cassava, as Gov Obaseki Tours Investment Facilities, Farm by Agro-Allied Resources and Processing Nigeria (Contd.)



Also speaking during the tour was the Chairman of the Edo State Oil Palm Programme (ESOPP), Mr. Rasheed Sarumi, who expressed satisfaction over the business-friendly environment of Edo State, noting that the Programme will collaborate with the government more to create an initiative which would benefit small farmers.

He said: "Edo State is a business destination. You tell the Governor something and he understands quickly, and you could see Dufil speak to this. There have been challenges. We face challenges everyday but the method and manner in which those challenges are overcome give us the confidence to continue to invest. His Excellency spoke about 25 billion being for the plant. The oil palm farm is in excess of 50 billion naira already invested."

"Four out of eight of the ESOPP investors are the biggest users of cassava in Nigeria. Three of them are domiciled in Edo State. Of course, you have seen one of them today. I also know that you have been to Greenhill where they make ethanol."

"We are now going to collaborate with the government more to be able to create a programme, now more importantly, around the small farmers, so that it can benefit them and there can be consistent supply for them and also for food."

Also part of the Governor's entourage were: Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Hon. Monday Osaigbovo; Council Chairman, Ovia North East Local Government, Hon. Collins Ogbewe, amongst others.

Nosakhare Agbonigiarhuoyi



We are Open to Partnership to Upscale Capacity of Staff - Nehikhare



The Commissioner for Communication and Orientation, Mr. Chris Nehikhare has reiterated the State Government's commitment to building the capacity of its workforce to drive effective and efficient service delivery. Mr. Nehikhare who stated this while playing host to the leadership of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR), Edo State Chapter, in his office in Benin City, explained that training and retraining of staff is at the core of the Governor Obaseki-led administration, noting that the John Odigie Oyegun Public Service Academy (JOOPSA) was established to provide strategic and comprehensive training for Edo State Civil and Public Servants.

Mr. Nehikhare congratulated the newly appointed Executive members of the Association on their victory during the elections which made them the ExcOs of the Edo State Chapter of the NIPR, explaining that plans were on ground to build other Centers that would accommodate meetings and events by professional bodies, as it would be of immense benefit to the members of the Associations, especially in training and capacity building. The Commissioner urged the leadership of NIPR to harness ways that would help in convincing Media Officers and prospective media practitioners of the need to register with the Body, to achieve high-level ethical standards in the profession, promising that the Ministry would collaborate with NIPR in enhancing the capacity of staff.

Earlier, the State Chairman of NIPR, Edo State Chapter, Dr. James-Wisdom Abhulimen expressed appreciation to the Obaseki led administration for the giant strides taken in enhancing all sectors of the State and providing the enabling environment for workers in the State's Civil Service, adding that it had brought about a positive impact in the discharge of their duties.

Dr. Abhulimen who sued for a collaboration between the NIPR and the Ministry of Communication and Orientation in integrating Public Relations Professionals into key strategic government decision-making processes, explained that it would eliminate quackery, enhance capacity building and ensure that professional development initiatives are brought to the fore.

Highpoint of the event was the presentation of Communication materials to the Commissioner by the State Chairman of NIPR, Edo State Chapter.

In attendance at the meeting was the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Communication and Orientation, Dr. Desmond Agbama, the Secretary of NIPR (Edo State Chapter), Mr. Eboigbe Courage, amongst others.

Aichienede Akhabue Goodluck and Okojie Francisca

Edo State Govt Sets for Elimination of Malaria



The Edo State Ministry of Health in collaboration with the National Malaria Elimination Programme (NMEP) has held its Annual Validation of 2024 operational plan for the State Malaria Elimination Programme. The Programme is responsible for the formulation and facilitation of policies and guidelines, coordination of activities of partners and stakeholders, as well as support from the World Health Organization (WHO).

According to the Health Commissioner, represented by the Director of Public Health, Dr. Stevenson Ojifo, while appreciating participants' turn-out at the event, noted that the state government is working extensively not only on reducing the prevalence of malaria in the state but in other aspects like the lassa fever, amongst others.

In a statement signed by the Deputy Director of Public Health, Dr. Osagie Igbinigie, "The annual event is geared at reviewing and validating the Annual Malaria Operational Plan (MOP) for state malaria elimination programme. MOP serves as management tool and blueprint that translates strategic objectives into planned activities meant to move from one milestone to the other. It provides direction and focuses on the programme implementation.

"The five-year plan which spans from 2021 to 2025 with five specific objectives which include improving utilisation of vector control interventions by 2025; ensuring the provision of chemo prevention services to the population; Improving the evidence generated from reliable data from all facilities to help decision making; collaboration and strategic partnerships with different kinds of individuals in the private sector as well as to mobilise resources and financial support".

Dr. Chukwuyem Okoh, an independent consultant for the Federal Government and the Facilitator of the 2023/2024 Malaria Programme Review and 2024 Annual Plan Exercise in Edo State, stated that there is a plan to reduce the prevalence of malaria from its current high level, where it is killing lots of persons especially pregnant women and children who are most vulnerable.

Dr. Okoh revealed that currently, Nigeria is one of the countries with the highest burden of malaria in the world, which accounts for over 27% of the total global malaria burden, hence the plan by government across all levels putting efforts to significantly reduce the number of cases and deaths due to malaria to about less than 10% prevalence which translates to 50 deaths per 1,000 of the Population.

The State Health Promotion Officer, Dr. Denyinye Hitler, who made a presentation on the plans of the State Promotion Department of the Ministry of Health for the 2024 MOP, stated that there will be pre-testing of materials which will cut across all religious sect as well as different strata of the society so as to be able to ascertain the level of acceptability of the materials on the elimination of malaria before mass production and dispatching of same would be done, to avoid wastage of available resources due to possible rejection.

Lending his voice, the Chairman of Private Medical Practitioners, Dr. Godfrey Imuetinyan, asserted that there is need for government to collaborate with the private medical practitioners owing to the fact that most of the private facilities are the first point of call for malaria patients. He added that the private practitioners take care of up to 60 to 70% of medical cases in the society, hence they are willing to collaborate with government and to see how they can be incorporated to be effectively involved in controlling malaria.

Dr. Imuetinyan clamored for more trainings and engagement by the government with the private sector so as to foster unity as well as educate private practitioners on the need to send in regular and true data not for the purpose of taxation but to facilitate planning as well as having good and reliable database.

He applauded the Godwin Obaseki-led administration for introducing the Edo State Health Insurance Scheme (EDOHIS), which according to him, is what obtains in other developed societies of the world.

Highpoint of the event was the plan and budget presentations by various departments of the Edo State Ministry of Health, which are involved in the National Malaria Elimination Programme in line with the objectives of the programme.

Participants present at the engagement include representatives of the World Health Organisation (WHO), UNICEF, staff of Ministry of Health, Orientation staff from the Ministry of Communication and Orientation, amongst others.

Ebuanekpe Joy



Edo State Govt Flags Off Reconstruction of Roads in Egor LGA



As part of his developmental agenda of Making Edo Great Again, the Edo State Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki, has flagged off the reconstruction and rehabilitation of roads, measuring about 9.7km, and cutting across over 20 communities in Egor Local Government area of the state.

Speaking at the flag off event which took place at the popular Uwelu Road, being one of the roads to be reconstructed in the first quarter of year 2024, Governor Godwin Obaseki, represented by the Honourable Commissioner for Roads and Bridges, Hon. Osazee Ethan Uzamere, noted that the road construction project will enhance the economic life of Egor residents.

Obaseki said: “Egor local government is important to the state as it is one of the historic local governments. The Uwelu Spare Parts Road is used to serve as a bypass and can also serve as an alternative route to reduce traffic around the area. The project, which is long overdue, has been bad for a very long period of time.

“This project is going to enhance the economic life of Egor local government. Work commenced over a week ago in the community. We are doing a lot of adjoining roads around here. The total number of roads to be constructed is 9.7 km, which will make use of concrete technology with rigid pavement”.

According to the Governor, besides the reconstruction of the road, a mini water storm project will be embarked on, as well as the construction of concrete drains to curb the recurrent flooding problems faced by residents and motorists in the area, which has caused so many landlords to abandon their houses and many businesses to relocate.

The Egor Local Government Chairman, Hon. Eghe Ogbemudia, applauded the state government for its continuous effort in making sure that the area is developed, noting that, “The road is a bypass linking several communities such as Evbotubu, Okhokhugbo, Ikpea, Uwelu, and so on”, while pledged her support as well as that of her local government, in ensuring that Governor Godwin Obaseki finishes his tenure well and strong.

Upon completion, the road leading to the popular Uwelu Spare Parts Market and others, which are marked for reconstruction would link more than 20 communities. Such development would further improve the living standards of people in the area as well as boost economic activities, thereby creating wealth for all.

Ebuanekpe Joy



CARTOON

Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs

01/24

The Three Money-sketeers



Umar-Farouq • Edu • Shehu

SPECIAL FEATURE

Edo-CSDA Micro-Projects: Transforming Communities in Post Covid-19 Era

UGBEGUN COMMUNITY
CONSTRUCTION OF PRIMARY SCHOOL/ BOREHOLE


In the aftermath of the Covid-19 global pandemic, the world faced a myriad of challenges, notably a deepening poverty in developing nations. The repercussions ranging from economic disruptions to the strain on healthcare systems, have hit vulnerable communities hard. These impacts are starkly evident in Nigeria, where the closure of numerous micro and small businesses during the pandemic led to job losses, disrupting essential services and pushing more people below the poverty line.

Responding to these crises, the Nigeria Covid-19 Action Recovery and Economic Stimulus (NG-CARES) program was born, aiming to alleviate the effects of the pandemic on vulnerable individuals, farmers, households facing economic challenges, and proprietors of micro and small enterprises. Edo-CARES, a tailored adaptation of NG-CARES, is specifically designed to fit into how things already work in Edo State.

The State CARES Steering Committee serves as the overseeing body for State CARES, while the State CARES Coordinating Unit (SCCU) takes charge of supervising the implementing agencies, such as Community and Social Development Agency (CSDA), State Employment and Expenditure for Result (SEEFOR), amongst others. This approach ensures effective alignment with the unique needs of Edo State.

At the heart of this initiative is the Edo State Community Social Development Agency (Edo-CSDA), entrusted with implementing the state's CARES program. As a Community-Driven Development (CDD) platform, Edo-CSDA actively involves communities in project identification, planning, and execution, with communities contributing three percent of the project cost. The goal is to integrate this community-driven approach into regular government service delivery.

Operating across the 18 local government areas of the state, Edo-CSDA collaborates closely with the Local Government Review Committee (LGRC) to ensure project approval, preventing duplication and streamlining implementation at the grassroots level. The Agency has notably supported the construction of critical community projects.

The impact of the micro-projects spearheaded by Edo-CSDA is increasingly evident as communities across the state witness transformative changes. Micro-projects, encompassing the construction and renovation of boreholes, markets, townhalls, culverts, health centres, staff quarters, classrooms, school libraries and laboratories, are empowering communities across the 18 local government areas.

SOBE COMMUNITY
CONSTRUCTION OF HIGH SCHOOL LABORATORY


One of the noteworthy outcomes is the improved access to essential services, which translates to enhanced well-being and increased opportunities for education within the benefiting communities. The micro-projects have proven instrumental in generating economic opportunities. As the projects progress, communities have experienced an upswing in economic activities, particularly through the construction phase, leading to job creation and increased income for local residents. This injection of economic vitality contributes to overall community development.

A significant benefit emerging from the micro-projects is the strengthening of community cohesion. The collaborative approach employed by Edo-CSDA, involving community members in decision-making through needs assessments and project selection, has fostered a sense of unity and shared responsibility. This participatory model ensures that projects align closely with the unique needs and aspirations of each benefiting community.

Infrastructure improvements resulting from the micro-projects, such as the construction of boreholes and classrooms, have directly contributed to an enhanced quality of life through potable water supply systems, better educational facilities, and upgraded healthcare infrastructure, resulting in improved living standards of residents, creating a positive ripple effect within these communities.

The completed and ongoing micro-projects showcase a successful partnership between the Edo State Government and local communities. The government's commitment to contributing 97% of the project cost reflects a shared responsibility for community development.

This collaborative effort reinforces the idea that effective development stems from harmonious alliance between government initiatives and community aspirations. The emphasis on community engagement reflects a profound understanding of the unique needs and aspirations of the people, turning them into active participants rather than mere recipients.

Edo-CSDA's distinctive approach, marked by its unwavering commitment to transparency, active community engagement, and a targeted focus on critical infrastructure, not only addresses immediate needs but also establishes a commendable blueprint for future development initiatives in the state. By prioritizing transparency, the agency ensures that all stakeholders are well-informed, fostering trust and collaboration.

Gloria Agbongiasede

SPECIAL FEATURE

Why Gov Obaseki Deserves Applause in Healthcare, Human Capacity Development, Prompt Salary, Pension Payment



Attempting to encapsulate the multitude of accomplishments within a 7-year administrative timeframe of the Governor Godwin Obaseki administration, is akin to navigating an endless narrative loop. Each recounting of one achievement inevitably leads to the revelation of another, creating an intricate tapestry of success that seems boundless. However, it is my fervent admiration for his exemplary leadership, steadfast commitment, and prioritization of the people's welfare that compels me to highlight some of his legendary deeds.

Foremost among his initiatives is the establishment of comprehensive health coverage for all workers, reflecting his profound understanding of the adage 'health is wealth.'

Governor Obaseki is resolute in ensuring the well-being of the state's workforce, irrespective of the Ministry, Department, or Agency (MDA). The Governor acknowledges the foundational role that good health plays in individual and collective prosperity. A healthy workforce is more productive, contributing positively to the state's overall development.

The Governor and his dedicated team on the comprehensive health coverage scheme, consistently enhance the health insurance system, striving to encompass the ever-expanding workforce. The absorption initially began with the involvement of civil and public servants and was subsequently expanded to encompass pensioners, among others.

Also, in recent years, Obaseki has placed a strong emphasis on enhancing the capabilities of civil and public servants. The focal point of this commitment has been the training and retraining of the workforce, facilitated by the establishment of the John Odigie Oyegun Public Service Academy (JOOPSA) and the Edo State Information and Communication Technology Agency (ICTA).

A great number of staff have participated in diverse courses and modules directly aligned with their job roles and duties. The Governor acknowledges the vital importance of imparting the necessary knowledge to workers for the successful governance of the state.

Through a clear series of commitments and substantial investments in JOOPSA and ICTA, the training academy and agency have evolved into a benchmark, serving as a point of reference for other states and countries.

Human capacity development has become an essential element under Governor Obaseki's administration. The rationale is clear; a well-equipped workforce, often considered the engine of government, is crucial for the overall improvement of the system, as the two are interdependent.

The development of human capacity encompasses both theoretical knowledge and digital training. Every category of workers within the system has been educated on the use of computers and other modern technological devices. This has led to the implementation of a fully paperless governance system in Edo, which has been in operation since September 2023.

Another noteworthy achievement of the administration lies in the timely payment of salaries and pensions. This aspect should not be underestimated, as the administration consistently meets its commitment to pay workers' salaries, pensions, and gratuities without default.

The prompt payment of salaries serves as a motivating factor, keeping workers attentive to fulfilling their assigned roles and responsibilities.

The timely payment of pensions also provides significant support and relief to pensioners, offering them the financial assistance they deserve after years of dedicated service, prompting civil and public servants to work more effectively, diligently and with honesty, in view of a working pension system that will cater for their retirement.

The Obaseki-led administration unfolds like an engaging narrative, where each commitment seamlessly links to the next, forming an unending tale of accomplishments. This interwoven storyline highlights the Governor's commendable efforts, deserving a collective round of applause for the significant strides made in uplifting the lives of workers and citizens alike.

Omoruyi Patricia Osayomare

THE SERVICE CORNER

New Year Message to Edo Civil, Public Servants by Edo State Head of Service, Dr. Anthony Okungbowa Esq.



Happy New year to all Civil/ Public Servants in the State. I welcome you all to a glorious Year 2024. Let me use this opportunity to extend my heartfelt gratitude to you all for your unflinching support and commitment to the Edo State Transformation and Enhancement Program (EDOSTEP) in the Civil/Public Service of Edo State in the outgone Year 2023.

2. Your commitment to the success of the Transformation and Enhancement of the Civil/ Public Service initiated by His Excellency, Godwin N. Obaseki, Governor of State, has set us apart, inter alia, as the most digitalised Public Service in Nigeria today.

3. As Civil/Public Servants, our responsibility is to serve as the engine of government and provide a veritable platform through which the policies and programmes of government can have meaningful impact on the people.

It is in recognition of this fact that the government of Edo State has deliberately strengthened the Civil/Public Service so that it can play this critical role in the polity.

4. Being currently the best paid and most motivated public service in Nigeria, with one of the most formidable and ambitious intellectual property resource development initiatives in any public service in Nigeria today and, quite easily, the most conducive work space environment and the most efficient work process in Nigeria today, there is no doubt that the Government of Edo State has done more than enough to enable public servants perform efficiently.

5. It is, therefore, incumbent on us to respond to this support, rise to the occasion and give our work our best shot in order to justify the huge investment and confidence of Government in us.

6. Accordingly, I implore us all to embrace this New Year with a renewed passion and an even higher level of commitment and determination in order to make a complete success of the transformation initiative of Government and contribute to making Edo State Great Again. As we rev up the transformation initiative this year, particularly with the introduction of Artificial Intelligence into the digital governance space promised by HE the Governor, I urge us to brace up to the challenge of adapting to the ever- changing dynamics of digital governance.

7. We are Public Servants. Our duty is to serve the public and we have the responsibility to do so with integrity, impartiality, accountability, transparency, zest, passion and total commitment and dedication to the growth and development of our State. Here lies the quintessence of public service.

8. Together, we can build the service of our dreams with a legacy of excellence for future generations of civil and public servants- that institution of government that serves as the catalyst for growth and development and as a worthy partner to the political class in interpreting and transmitting their policies and programs for the overall good of the people.

9. I wish you all a happy and prosperous year 2024.

**Anthony Osas Okungbowa Esq., Ph.D Constitutional Law.
Head Of Service,
Edo State.**

Commitment Honored, Pledge Fulfilled: An Account of 13th Month Salary in Edo State

In the early months of 2023, precisely in May, Governor Obaseki made a significant announcement at the Sir Victor Uwaifo Creative Hub in Benin City. Standing before a sizable gathering of Edo State workers, he conducted an interactive session with civil and public servants ranging from Salary Grade Levels eight to 17.

During this session, the governor declared the initiation of a 13th-month salary implementation. Skepticism lingered in the air, as such a practice was unfamiliar to many. Traditionally, salaries are dispensed on a monthly basis, aligning with a 12-month payment structure per year. Even within this framework, Edo had been known to compensate its workforce ahead of numerous other states in the Federation. Yet, a prevailing doubt echoed through the masses, suspecting a political promise destined to remain unfulfilled.

As the months unfolded, drawing near the anticipated timeframe for the 13th-month payment, Governor Obaseki expanded the bonus distribution to include pensioners/senior citizens of the state. This gesture was intended to express gratitude for their dedicated service and labor rendered to the state during their years of vigor and strength.

Demonstrating a compassionate understanding of the crucial nature of retirement and old age, the Governor extended these benefits to them, irrespective of their current inactive service status. As time elapsed from the announcement's revelation and subsequent approval, the days unfolded, ushering in December like the blink of an eye. To the surprise of many workers, the 13th month salary materialized as promised.

In the early hours of Wednesday, December 27th, 2023, alerts illuminated screens, validating Governor Obaseki's commitment. Affectionately referred to as the 'wake and see governor,' he never fails to astound. When he makes a promise, he adheres to it, embodying a leader of unparalleled accountability to his constituents.

Following the Governor Obaseki-led administration's effective resolution of all doubts through the fulfillment of promises, it is crucial for all concerned parties to persist in placing their trust in this government. The administration has substantiated its commitment by consistently providing excellent services, promptly delivering on promises, prioritizing the welfare of workers and pensioners as well as the general needs of the people since its inception. Citizens and residents are justified in maintaining their belief and optimism in the current government. As the saying goes, hope precedes the realization of aspirations.

Omoruyi Patricia Osayomore



INSIDE JOOPSA



John Odigie-Oyegun
Public Service
Academy
(JOOPSA)



International Women's Day 2024

INSPIRE INCLUSION:
Empowering Women in Public
Service Through Inclusive
Leadership"



John Odigie Oyegun
Public Service Academy,
1, Okada Avenue Benin City



9AM



8TH MAR
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PICTURES FROM THE GOVERNOR'S DESK



Gov Godwin Obaseki joins residents in the state to watch the AFCON semi final clash between Nigeria and South Africa at one of the viewing centers set up by Edo State Government



Gov Godwin Obaseki, First Lady, Mrs. Besty Obaseki, Pastor E.A Adeboye at the Light Up Edo Crusade



Gov Godwin Obaseki at the 2024 Ministry of Housing, Physical and Urban Planning Retreat held recently in Benin City





Gov Obaseki at the funeral service of Dr. Kolawole Shola Okeaya-Inneh (SAN) who passed on at 86



Edo State Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki and other South-South Governors during the 2024 BRACED Commission Governors' Council Meeting held in Benin City



Gov Obaseki during a tour of Agro-Allied Resources and Processing Nigeria Ltd.

EDO STATE INVESTMENT PROMOTION OFFICE [ESIPO] INFO PAGE

ESIPO in Position for Bullish 2024

The Edo State Investment Promotion Office, ESIPO, is preparing for a prosperous 2024 as market indicators signal a bullish trend. Amid projected favourable economic conditions for Nigeria in 2024, the Investment Promotion Agency conducted a one-day strategy meeting with staff and top management officials to capitalize on emerging opportunities across various sectors.

Highlighting positives from the Nigerian economy, Mrs. Ese Oshiote outlined opportunities for ESIPO, as Nigeria's GDP is expected to grow at 3.3% in 2024. The non-oil sector i.e. Agriculture; Construction; Trade and Services is predicted to be the driver of the set growth target. In the last six years, Edo State has solidified its position as the leading state for capital inflow, attracting key investors in Oil Palm (Saro), Manufacturing, Oil and Gas (Duport Refinery), Agro-processing, and others.

The one-day workshop aimed to fine-tune ESIPO's strategy to provide robust support for new and existing businesses in Edo in the new year. The team critically analyzed its 2023 performance, identifying areas of improvement to attract new investments and strengthen relations with existing businesses.

Mr. Abdulkadir Abdullah, leading the Investment Promotion and Global Outreach team, identified Manufacturing, Agro Processing, Renewable energy, Technology, and Services as key sectors ESIPO will focus on in 2024 to attract domestic and foreign direct investment, with a focus on climate-smart investments.

ESIPO's Aftercare department, responsible for existing investors, received feedback on key issues such as energy supply and logistics infrastructure. The state has initiated steps, including the 95MW Ossiomo Power Plant and awarding new road contracts in Q4, 2023, to address these concerns.

The business development team emphasized the need to equip the one-stop-shop and a functioning business directory to enhance public access to contacts of new and existing businesses in the State. Mary Omogbare highlighted the use of technology to improve agency efficiency and productivity.

Mr. Joel Edionwere, Chairman of the Edo State Productivity Committee, urged teams to outline methods for identifying investors via sectors and target them with unique strategies and specific deliverables. Managing Director Mr. Kelvin Uwaibi stressed the importance of consistent stakeholder engagement, accurate data, and technology tools for investment and corporate social responsibility tracking in 2024.

Uwaibi encouraged the team to seek opportunities and face challenges with determination, emphasizing that 2024 is crucial for the Godwin Obaseki administration. The agency's proactive stance has instilled confidence, making it a go-to choice for those eyeing investment opportunities in the State. As Edo State's economic landscape evolves positively, ESIPO stands poised to ensure a promising start to the new year.

Osaigbovo Frank Okundia



Edo State Elevates Local Agriculture with Support for 640 Smallholder Farmers



In a strategic move to enhance local food production and bolster the agricultural sector, the Edo State Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) collaborated with the State Government, Nigeria COVID-19 Action Recovery and Economic Stimulus (NG-Cares), World Bank, and other stakeholders. Their joint effort resulted in the provision of essential irrigation equipment and assets to benefit 640 smallholder farmers across the state.

Dr. Edward Izevbigie, the Project Coordinator, conveyed strong encouragement to the farmers during the presentation ceremony and launch of the dry season farming initiative. He underscored the unwavering commitment of the Edo State Government to supporting smallholder farmers, emphasizing the perpetual demand for food production to meet continuous consumption needs. Honorable Commissioner for Agriculture and Food Security, Mr. Stephen Idehenre, highlighted the state's visionary strides in agricultural transformation. Specifically, he referenced the successful FADAMA Edo Cares program, which previously empowered 1,832 smallholder farmers, aiming to revolutionize the seasonal agricultural cycle and fortify local production.

Mr. Idehenre assured farmers of the state's proactive measures in addressing security challenges faced by farmers, particularly those arising from cattle herdsman. He detailed the deployment of machinery to tag grazing animals, enabling identification and owner tracking. Moreover, the state has undertaken comprehensive training for forest officers and rangers to ensure farmers' safety. Under the aegis of the Nigeria COVID-19 Action Recovery and Economic Stimulus (NG-Cares), the Edo Cares Result Area 2 facilitated the distribution of

crucial equipment—de-feathering machines, solar irrigation pumps, generators, among others—to poultry and irrigation farmers, totaling 640. Further phases are planned to extend support to cassava farmers, rice farmers, processors, millers, and others, projected to benefit a total of 2,078 individuals.

Beneficiaries expressed profound gratitude for the equipment received, foreseeing enhanced efficiency and increased yields. Angela Otabo, a poultry farmer, highlighted the potential of the new de-feathering machine to boost processing efficiency and revenue.

Mr. Monday Ebuaghe Imafidon, a vegetable farmer, emphasized the significant role the new solar pump would play in cultivating vegetables during the dry season, thanking Governor Godwin Obaseki for his unwavering support of smallholder farmers. Edo State remains a pivotal contributor to Nigeria's agricultural sector, notably leading in oil palm production and contributing significantly to rubber, timber, and oil palm production in the country.

The event saw the participation of esteemed government officials, including Dr. Peter Osagie, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Mr. Kelly Iyamu M&E, the State Representative for Edo NG-CARES, alongside farmers representing the three senatorial districts of Edo State.

Osaigbovo Frank Okundia



United Nigeria Airlines Commences Operation in Edo, as Gov Obaseki Takes Executive Chairman on Projects Tour (Contd.)



“On the issue of lighting the airport, we worked with the government at that point in time and made a bit of capital contributions to improve the lighting system so that we could extend the flying hours. “There was the issue of the ILS; the landing instruments, and with pressure from us, and the Minister at that time was very kind, they came in here and help install landing instruments. So, the Benin airport was able to attract enough of the requisite equipment for airlines to be able to come in and out of this state. A few issues still need to be cleared, which we are working on.

“What have all of these done? All of these have made the Benin Airport move from, I believe, an airport that was about sixth or eighth in terms of traffic in the country, to, I believe, number three or four in terms of traffic flow in the country”.

The Governor who stressed that the airport can be further improved upon for maximum utilization, noted that there are ongoing conversations with the aviation authorities on how the state government can render more support to make the airport a lot more efficient.

Obaseki emphasized the state government's desire to reduce discomfort and inconvenience for citizens and other passengers flying in and out of the state, noting it as a reason for attracting more airline operators, while assuring them of the support and cooperation of the government of Edo State.

The Governor further led the Executive Chairman and members of his team on a guided tour of some projects executed by his administration in the state, stressing that the essence of governance is to improve the lives and well-being of the people. While acknowledging the presence of diverse ideas, Obaseki laid emphasis on a leader's responsibility to navigate the variations and understand how resources can be unified to address the competing needs and desires of the populace.

Visiting the Benin City Mall currently near completion, Sir Victor Uwaifo Creative Hub and Sound Stage, and the John Odigie Oyegun Public Service Academy (JOOPSA), the Governor noted that it was crucial for the airline to witness firsthand, the infrastructures and reforms by his administration, geared towards increasing traffic flow and mitigating the risks of conducting business in the state.

Godspower Eguasa & Violet Obamwonyi

Gov Obaseki Unveils Benin City Mall, Highlights Seven Years Achievements in Office

...Genesis Cinema, stores commence operation



In a heartfelt address at the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols organized by Edo State Government, and the Pre-opening ceremony of the Benin City Mall, the Edo State Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki, expressed his profound gratitude and appreciation for the journey of the past seven years, attributing the success of his administration to divine guidance and providence and the unwavering support of Edo citizens, both at home and in the diaspora. The event which held on Thursday December 21st 2023, at the premises of the newly built Benin City Mall on Sapele Road, Benin, saw a convergence of diverse groups in the state, marking not just the yuletide celebration, but also the commencement of operations at the Mall.

Speaking during his address, Obaseki noted: “Tonight is one of gratitude and appreciation; gratitude to God Almighty for the opportunity of the last seven years, to have managed and governed this great state called Edo, and appreciation to all of you, great citizens of Edo who gave me the mighty opportunity to serve. It has been a very unique and gratifying opportunity. “It has also been a revealing one and tonight we decided to structure this celebration to let you know that each and every one of you, from all facets of our society, have made it possible for us to achieve what we have achieved today. We just cannot but thank God Almighty and thank all of you.”

The Governor also revealed that the Benin City Mall, which is an initiative of his administration, will emerge as a beacon of excellence, offering not just a shopping haven but an unparalleled retail experience, unrivaled not only in Nigeria but across West Africa. According to Obaseki, “I want to welcome all of you to today’s festival of nine lessons and carols and also to the pre-opening of your mall, the Benin City Mall, which will stand out as one of the best malls in Nigeria, if not in West Africa, where you will have a real retail experience. We invited you tonight to this event to see what we have done in terms of creating a retail experience for Edo State.”

The Governor noted that the mall which is built on two levels; the top level and the underground level, has 49 shops including a library. The underground level has a night club, world class gym, and a world class spa. The mall also has four cinemas, restaurants, cafes, shops, and office facilities. In a moving reflection on the strides made since his assumption of office in 2016 as Governor, Obaseki

stated that all the promises made to the people by his administration have been surpassed, as affirmed during the 2023 Alaghodaro Business Summit, revealing that his administration’s goal is to lay down an unshakable foundation that would guarantee the future of the state, as Edo State now belongs to all Edo people, not just the privileged few.

Obaseki said: “You should not worry; what we have done over the last seven years is to lay a foundation that nobody can change. People want to know what would happen when I am no longer Governor; I say nothing, because Edo State is now owned by Edo people. We have reclaimed your state and given it back to you. The fight we have had over the last seven years is to see that nobody from outside of here can control what we do here. Edo is for all Edo people and not for the few.

“I have tried to set a new direction for this state and I am giving it back to you, knowing that you will protect it and make sure that we never go back to where we came from. We are rebuilding a state that is known for knowledge, education, sports and the best values that have sustained the black man.” The Governor further appreciated the support from all the institutions of governance in the state as well as the youths. The carol night saw different lessons and carols read and rendered by Edo sons and daughters from different facets of the society. Highlight of the event was the official opening of the Genesis Cinema and stores at the Benin City Mall by Governor Obaseki.

In attendance were: Edo State First Lady, Mrs. Betsy Obaseki; Speaker Edo House of Assembly, Hon. Blessing Agbebaku; Edo State Chief Judge, Justice Daniel Okungbowa; Edo State PDP Chairman, Dr. Tony Aziegbemhi; Secretary to the Edo State Government, Osarodion Ogie Esq.; Edo State Head of Service, Dr. Anthony Okungbowa Esq.; Chief of Staff to the Governor, Hon. Monday Osaigbovo; other members of the State Executive Council, Heads of Parastatals; Members of Edo State House of Assembly; Members of Edo State Judiciary; religious leaders; traditional leaders; union leaders; business groups; civil and public servants and other residents of the state.

Violet Osatohanmwun Obamwonyi

Edo State Govt Hosts Healthcare Leadership Retreat, Fashions Strategy for Sustaining Health Reforms

...as Gov Obaseki emphasizes oversight role of health ministry, healthcare financing, decentralization, data utilization



Edo State Government recently held a two-day healthcare leadership retreat to appraise the health reforms journey in the state. The event which held 20th and 21st January 2024, was aimed at fostering alignment among key stakeholders in the health ecosystem and devising strategy for sustaining the healthcare reforms by the Governor Godwin Obaseki-led administration. The retreat saw the participation of healthcare experts from the cream of health professionals in the state.

In his remark, the Edo State Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki, reaffirmed his vision for healthcare in the state, reiterating his desire for the state to have a government-led health sector, aimed at increasing access to quality and effective healthcare through sustained financing, independent of external funding, and with the central focus on improving the well-being of citizens and residents of the state.

He underscored the significance of health as a fundamental aspect of human existence while questioning the practice of seeking healthcare services abroad for a highly populated country like Nigeria. The Governor urged a shift in focus towards developing a robust healthcare system locally, tailored to meet the needs of the approximately five million residents of the state.

According to Obaseki, "It is so strange that we have externalized health care services. That is, you are ill here now, and somehow, what strikes people's mind is to go abroad for treatment. We have externalized health to the extent that we have not looked inward to ourselves to understand that two hundred million people cannot all be seeking care abroad when they are ill. Most African countries, even much poorer countries, do not do what we are doing. They have tried to develop their healthcare system to support their citizens. For Edo State we have about five million people across the whole demographic set who need health care and my concern is how to care for them."

Speaking on the essence of the retreat, Obaseki revealed that there was a need to bring all the players in the health ecosystem together, because of the growing concern regarding their understanding and internalization of his administration's healthcare strategy, urging healthcare practitioners to align with the state government's vision for healthcare in the state.

Obaseki noted: "I have requested that we have this retreat because there are several things going through my mind as I wind down and one of them is that I am not convinced that the players in the health ecosystem really understand what we are trying to do. I do not think they understand our strategy and therefore have not been able to internalize the new direction. So, I decided to bring the leadership together for this retreat and explain to them why we are doing what we need to do and imperatively show them that if we do not do it right, we are going to be in trouble."

"Of the five million people in Edo today, I do not think 200,000 people come through our own system. Think of general hospitals, how many people really come there anymore. So, we have not moved in terms of our mindset that the government now needs to take care of everybody's healthcare, not just a few people who come to our service points."

Emphasizing the oversight function of the Ministry of Health, the Governor mandated the Ministry alongside other allied health agencies and parastatals to carry out effective service delivery by utilizing data, leveraging technology and starting from the basic care provisions. "As a Governor, I am responsible for everybody in Edo State and their wellbeing, so I must know how they are being taken care of when they are ill. Whether it is the herbal doctors, patent medicine shop next door, private clinics or my own hospitals, I must know. That is why I need the Ministry of Health", Obaseki stressed.



Obaseki further noted that emphasis on the healthcare system should be at the primary level, hence the reason behind his administration's focus on rehabilitating Primary Healthcare Centers (PHCs) across the state. According to him, "When we think through healthcare, where should our emphasis be? Whereas in normal places, it is the foundation, the beginning, the primary healthcare where that child is born; that facility that is a walking distance from you, where you do not have to go and sit nine hours to get a card. So, we need a total redesign of our healthcare space and the emphasis must now be on primary healthcare".

"The strategy should reflect a vision that is geared towards a new way of thinking about how we can provide healthcare; spell out the explicit role of the government through the Ministry of Health in healthcare provision. In developing your strategy, at the leadership level, we should have our five-year strategic healthcare plan from which we can derive our Annual Operation Plan (AOP). The problem of healthcare is state and local. Healthcare financing is the key because healthcare is not cheap," the Governor added.

Earlier in his welcome address, the Edo State Commissioner for Health, Dr. Samuel Alli, expressed gratitude to the Governor for the retreat, stating that the purpose of the retreat was to align all the health-related MDAs in the state, with a focus on improving healthcare solutions to the people. The commissioner highlighted achievements in the state's healthcare regulations, improved partnerships and ongoing projects.

Also speaking, Mrs. Uzor H. Ofulue, an Engagement Partner at Lauren Parker Limited, a consulting company, highlighted their six-year collaboration with Edo State Government, which focuses on improving the healthcare system in the state. She hinted on their pivotal role in shaping and implementing interventions, especially with the Edo Health Improvement Program (Edo-HIP) initiative.

Ofulue noted that the objective of the retreat was to assess progress, align with Governor Obaseki's agenda, and determine the proximity upon which to set goals, noting that with less than a year in the Governor's administration, a retreat like this with MDA leaders to ensure alignment will enable the team to finish strong and achieve success.

The retreat saw a presentation on some of the reforms that the Obaseki-led administration has pioneered to offer the best healthcare services to the people, which include; rehabilitation of PHCs across the state; rehabilitation of the Edo State University Teaching Hospital, Auchi, Irrua Specialist Teaching Hospital, Irrua, and Stella Obasanjo Specialist Hospital, Benin; amendment of PHCs law; training of about 2000 PHCs workers; launching of the Edo-HIP in 2018; passing of the Edo State Health Insurance Commission bill into law in May, 2019; launching of the Basic Health Care Provision Fund (BHCPF), an equity plan targeted to providing free medical care for the vulnerable groups in the society.

The health reforms presentation also include; rehabilitation and opening of the Edo State College of Nursing within 10 months after being shut down for seven years; 200,000 enrollees on EdoHIS in 2023 which represent approximately 5% of the state's population; securing funding from the French government to start an emergency response team; launching of the pensioners health insurance scheme; revenue generation of two billion in 2023 by Stella Obasanjo Specialist Hospital, making it the first state-owned government hospital in the region to achieve the feat, amongst others.

Violet Osatohanmwen Obamwonyi

Edo State Govt, ETAHT, Receives Accolades on Practical Approach to Eradicating Human Trafficking, Irregular Migration Among Youths in Edo

...ETAHT shines as first taskforce established by law in Nigeria, seeks direct partnership with Belgian govt



Edo State Government, through the Edo State Taskforce Against Human Trafficking (ETAHT), has received commendations from the Deputy Belgian Head of Mission, Veronique Bernard, and her team, during a courtesy visit to the Agency in Benin, to discuss strategies and possible areas of partnerships in order to consolidate on the efforts by the state government in addressing the ills of human trafficking and irregular migration in the state. According to the Belgian Head of Mission, though the menace of human trafficking and irregular migration is a global one, the Belgian Government is most concerned about Edo State, as it seeks to assist young victims of the vices in the state.

According to Bernard, "It is our pleasure to be here. We are making an awareness campaign on the risk of illegal migration, because 30% of victims of trafficking from Nigeria that are emerging in Belgium are from Benin City, 40% from Lagos, and the remaining percentage from other states including Abuja.

"That was the reason we came to Benin and why we made a first contact and press brief this morning, to display to the people that illegal migration is very risky and dangerous and that legal migration remains a better option.

"We see young girls from Benin City being forced into prostitution and exploited by traffickers. We want to use this medium to sensitize them on false promises used by traffickers to enslave them."

Bernard, while commending the massive impact made by the Governor Godwin Obaseki-led administration in arresting the menace, applauded the strategic approach adopted by ETAHT in rehabilitating and reintegrating victims back into society, and providing them a place to flourish in the state.

She said: "We are delighted to hear about the impact your government is making, everything you have said here was not just mere theory, but practical, they were all practical approaches and that is how it should be. We look forward to reviewing and working with your government. Once again, thank you for having us".

On her part, the Executive Secretary of the Edo State Taskforce Against Human Trafficking, Ms. Itohan Okungbowa, while addressing the team from Belgium, highlighted the developmental strides of Governor Godwin Obaseki, noting that Edo is blessed to have a Governor who is passionate and committed to eradicating the ills of human trafficking and irregular migration in the state, creating the enabling environment for youths in the state to thrive and be productive.

Okungbowa said: "You are welcome to Nigeria, Edo State in particular. This is your first time coming here, and we will try and ensure we make this very memorable for you. Some of these fears you have expressed regarding the activities and dangers of human trafficking were perceptions the Edo State Governor had even before he assumed office in 2016, about 7 years ago.

"He already saw these ills, particularly regarding Edo State. And that may have informed his positive decision to have made our office one of his priority project immediately he became the Governor of Edo State, to tackle the ills of human trafficking and irregular Migration. The Governor saw the problem, embraced it, and proffered a solution.

"We are the first Human Trafficking Taskforce in Nigeria, established by law. I recall that from the last national meeting held in 2023; we stood tall as the first to be set up and also created by statute. And we have been a model and also a source of encouragement to other states in respect of our operational style.

"This shows the commitment of the Governor Godwin Obaseki-led administration in tackling the issues of human trafficking and irregular migration. Over 5,600 victims have been supported psychologically, economically and reintegrated to family and society since the inception of ETAHT.

"As part of government's effort to arrest the ills, we have skill acquisition centers across the three senatorial districts of the state to drive productivity among our youths, encourage entrepreneurship, as well as various centers to provide information on the need to migrate right if we have the need to".

She continued: "In the areas of Job creation, the Government is not relenting, as several jobs are being created, attracting young minds into the state workforce, and on merit basis.

"As we speak now, there are currently two rescued victims of human trafficking in our state shelter, while the suspects have been apprehended and under investigation with our investigating unit. Also, our data records and use have enabled us to keep planning the activities of our returnees both in the area of preventive approach, and continuous sensitisation".

Okungbowa while thanking the Belgian Government for continuous cooperation and interest in eradicating these vices, recommended direct partnership with the state government to promote accountability and aid wider impact.

According to Okungbowa, "As ETAHT, we have been doing much, but we want more direct partnership engagement with you. We appreciate the fact that you are also closely working with NGOs in the state, some of the NGOs are wise enough to carry us along, updating us on their activities with partners and beneficiaries"

"However, we want a situation where we can directly engage with you as partners for more robust achievements together. We thank you once again for coming and wish you a memorable experience".

Godspower Eguasa



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Edostatewastemanagementboard



EDSG Collaborates with ROLAC II on Proposed Correctional Service Bill



In a collaborative effort, the Edo State Ministry of Justice has partnered with the Rule of Law and Anti-corruption (ROLAC II) program, funded by the European Union to organise a validation session for the proposed Edo State Correctional Service Bill.

During the stakeholders engagement which held at Randekhi Royal Hotel in Benin City, Mr. Oluwale Osazee Uzzi, the Hon. Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice, Edo State, explained that the primary purpose of the meeting was to review the draft correctional law for Edo State with internal stakeholders. The goal was to ensure that their insights and inputs were considered and incorporated. Mr. Oluwale emphasized that the proposed Draft Correctional Service Bill would be subject to validation by stakeholders. If adopted, it would proceed to the State House of Assembly for consideration and passage. The Attorney General stressed the importance of involving various stakeholders from the early stages of the Correctional Service Bill review to its implementation. He highlighted their crucial role in the successful execution of the legislation.

In addition to Mr. Oluwale's remarks, Dr. Uju Agomoh, the Executive Director of Prisoners Re-orientation and Welfare Action (PRAWA) and a member of the United Nations Sub-Committee on Prevention of Torture, delivered a presentation on the Model State Correctional Service Law.

Dr. Agomoh further explained that the engagement aims to review the updated Edo State Correctional Service Bill, incorporating earlier inputs. She underscored the connection between correctional service, security, and development, urging stakeholders from various sectors to support implementing the bill to curb offending and re-offending behaviors.

She suggested the creation of a ministry or department within the Ministry of Justice to oversee the proper execution of the Model State Correctional Service Bill once it becomes law. The event saw the participation of notable figures, including the High Court Judge, Criminal Division, Hon. Justice Geraldine Imadegbelo, and Former President of the Customary Court of Appeal, Hon. Justice P.O. Isibor (Rtd). Members of the Updated Draft Correctional Service Law committee, representatives from Civil Society Organizations, Justice Development and Peace Commission, Nigerian Automobile Technicians Association, Benin Muslim Commission, Nigeria Correctional Services, ROLAC II, and the Edo State Ministry of Communication and Orientation were also present.

Eghosa Emily

Obaseki Flags Off 20km Ogba-Evbuodia-Upper Ekehuan Road Construction Project

...promises to complete project before administration's end



Edo State Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki, has flagged off the Ogba-Evbuodia-Upper Ekehuan road construction project. Addressing the host communities during the flag-off exercise, Obaseki assured them of his administration's determination to complete the road construction before the end of his administration, noting that the project is part of the state government's development plan to build new towns and cities in the state.

According to Obaseki, "This road that we are starting today, we will finish it. I do not say what I will not do. That is why I am giving it to two contractors. So, by the grace of God, and with the support of all of you, this road will be complete before I leave office."

"I also want to assure my brothers; the youths of this community, that this road is going to do more than you expect."

"In addition to this road, we want to extend Benin to this axis. We are building a new town that will occupy almost 500 hectares, just as we are doing in Irhirhi along this axis."

"It will bring jobs. It will bring development that you cannot imagine. So, you will not lose anything. We will work closely with you to make sure that we plan this area to be a modern area for dwelling", the Governor added.

Also present during the flag-off ceremony were: Secretary to Edo State Government, Osarodion Ogie Esq.; Chief of Staff to the Governor, Hon. Osaigbovo Iyoha; Edo State Commissioner for Road and Bridges, Ethan Uzamere; Members of Edo State House of Assembly; Traditional Heads of Communities, amongst others.

Nosakhare Agbonigiarhuoyi



Prioritizing Pensioners Wellbeing: A Sustainable Approach to Addressing Challenges in Old Age



Governor Godwin Obaseki consistently emerges as the driving force behind the welfare of senior citizens and pensioners in Edo. His administrative priorities revolve around the overall well-being of the people, placing a special emphasis on timely pension and gratuity payments, addressing longstanding arrears, ensuring the provision of quality and free healthcare services, and implementing various welfare-oriented initiatives.

A closer examination of the Pensions Board in Edo reveals a positive transformation in the state's pension system under the current administration. The intervention has led to a great improvement in pension payments. In October 2023, Governor Obaseki took a decisive step by approving the payment of a 29-year backlog of gratuities for pensioners under the State's Local Government Staff Pensions Board, covering the period from 1979 to 2008.

This decision represents a notable departure from the last gratuity payments made in 2006 during Former Governor Lucky Igbinedion's administration, as the News Agency of Nigeria reported. Prompt gratuity payments have now become a hallmark of Governor Obaseki's leadership. Demonstrating a continued commitment to enhancing the welfare of pensioners, Governor Obaseki recently endorsed their enrollment in the Edo Health Insurance Scheme (EDOHIS). Acknowledging that healthcare is a primary challenge pensioners face in their retirement years, the Governor facilitated their inclusion in the health insurance scheme.

This initiative, initiated in response to the economic downturn, aims to ensure that pensioners in the state have access to quality healthcare services without incurring personal expenses at healthcare facilities. The primary objective is to provide stability to pensioners by having the government cover the premiums on their behalf.

The government has allocated approximately 1 billion to provide free health insurance services to pensioners. Edo currently ranks as the second State in Nigeria to offer free healthcare services to pensioners across its 18 local government areas.

These comprehensive services encompass medical, dental, and eye care, among others, with the intention of assisting senior citizens in addressing their healthcare needs.

Furthermore, the Obaseki-led administration has extended the benefits of the approved 13th-month salary to pensioners in the state's civil and public service, providing additional evidence of the administration's unwavering commitment to their financial well-being.

In light of the various welfare programs designed for senior citizens in Edo, it would be entirely apt to attribute to Mr. Obaseki the title of 'Pensioners' Advocate'. This additional accolade would seamlessly align with the numerous titles and honours he has garnered, underscoring his dedication to service through impactful initiatives.

Omoruyi Patricia Osayomore



Gov Obaseki Hosts Consul General of China to State Banquet, Lauds Multi-Million Dollar Investments in State's Economy



Edo State Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki, has commended the Government of China on its impactful relationship with the state, which has culminated in diverse investment enterprises and job creation in the state. Obaseki made the remarks during the state banquet organized in honour of the Consul General of the People's Republic of China, Ms. Yan Yuqing, on Tuesday 16th January, 2024, at the New Festival Hall, Government House, Benin City. Obaseki said: "First, let me appreciate our visiting Consul General for her hard work. We met her first about a month and a half ago in Lagos, when we had the opportunity to see her before proceeding on a state visit to China, which she and Yongxing Steel Company graciously organized.

"For us, it is a very significant and important event, because it marks the relationship between a sub-national government in Nigeria with a global superpower. I was reading a few days ago — I think the Economists of London — the threats which China now poses to the world, particularly in terms of electric vehicles.

"The Chinese vehicles are now overtaking the global electronic vehicle market, which means that as we go into the future, China will transport the world. This is just a very small example of the kind of energy, the kind of resource that is locked in a huge country like China."

Obaseki stressed the importance of a buoyant relationship with China which according to him portends great opportunities for the state, noting that there are 7 Chinese companies in Edo, hiring thousands of people, mostly of Edo extraction.

The Governor while highlighting laudable investments established in the state, courtesy of the Government of China, assured of the state's continuous support and cooperation in promoting growth and building young talents among Edo residents, in partnership with the Chinese Government.

Obaseki said: "And from what we saw when we went to China, that is just a tip of the iceberg. Courtesy of the Chinese, today Edo hosts a steel company, we host a large ceramic tile-making company, we host companies that are making wood. In fact, Rongtai Wood is the largest MDF wood-making company in West Africa. We host a company making glass, the largest company in West Africa, and on and on. And from what we have seen, this is just the beginning."

Obaseki added: "In the area of industrialization, it is very clear to us that the future of Nigeria cannot be based on imports. Without foreign exchange, we cannot import. We have to make these things ourselves. And that is why we are encouraging and working very closely with the Chinese to see how they can come in and take advantage of the opportunities we offer in Edo, Particularly the gas assets we have.

"Edo is one of the few places in Nigeria with a lot of onshore gas reserves. And that is what we are pursuing and we hope that the federal government will continue to support and encourage such investments." The Governor thanked the Consul General for his visit, stressing on the warm and amiable reception of Edo people to the Chinese community in the state, a reason they see themselves as a part and parcel of the state.

In her remarks, the Edo State Commissioner for Education, Dr. Joan Oviawe, commended the developmental strides of Governor Godwin Obaseki in driving transformation across the different sectors of the state, noting that the state is happy and eager to continuously partner with the Chinese Government to drive continuous inflow of investments into the state.

Responding, the Consul General of the People's Republic of China in Lagos, Ms. Yan Yuqing, commended the visionary leadership of Governor Godwin Obaseki for creating the enabling environment for businesses to thrive in the state.

While expressing the Chinese Government's readiness to continuously support and partner with the state government in improving its education sector, especially vocational and technical education, Yuqing noted that over 700 citizens of China are happily residing in Edo with good testimonies from them about the hospitality and kindness of Edo citizens and residents. She said: "This is my first visit of the new year; I have chosen Edo State. At the first moment when I arrived in Benin City, I had already fallen in love with this old and new city. It is an old city with a long history. It is also a new city full of vitality, innovation and power.

"Thank you so much that today I have a very nice Edo name, Adesuwa, and I am so excited that you have excellent government, especially the leader, the excellent Governor. Last year in November, he had a successful visit to China and it was full of successful results. So, this time I came here to consolidate on his successful results in China. First is to support your vocational education in Edo State.

She added: "I am so satisfied that today the Edo State Polytechnic, Fuzhou Polytechnic and Yongxing Steel Company, signed the MOU. Just like the Director of the education department mentioned, this year, five excellent students will go to China to study and all financial support will be from China. And you know that Chinese people, the same like Nigerian people, we are so friendly, so warm, so kind. "I am so glad that here in Benin City, there are over 700 Chinese citizens living here. They are very happy to work, to live here and to contribute to the local economic and social development. They told me that here is their second motherland".

Godspower Eguasa

LG Head Empowers Residents with Grinding Machines

... assures of more govt empowerment, interventions



The Chairman, Esan Central Local Government Area, Hon. Paul Iyoha has reiterated his administration's commitment to empowering more residences of the Local Government and combating poverty in the land

The Chairman who gave this reassurance recently at the Local Government Secretariat in Irrua when he distributed grinding machines to thirty five beneficiaries drawn from across the various wards in the Local Government noted that his passion to see people empowered and doing well for themselves in the society drives his political zeal, adding that his administration will continue to push for more persons to be empowered in various forms of human endeavors.

According to him, "this Government at both the State and Local Government levels is committed to the welfare and well being of the people and doing all within its power to ensure that a greater number of its citizens are empowered and gainfully engaged with the intent to see a larger part of the society pulled out of the multi-dimensional poverty level".

While handing over the grinding machines to the beneficiaries, Hon. Iyoha admonished them to put the machines to profitable use so as to enable them provide for their immediate families as well as contribute their quota to their immediate environment.

Responding on behalf of the beneficiaries, Miss Maria Okoebor thanked the Local Government Chairman for the good gesture and promised that they will make good use of the grinding machines. Hon. Iyoha had earlier in November, 2023 distributed palliatives to and empowered members of persons living with physical disabilities in Esan Central LGA, to enable them become self reliant.

Present at the handing over ceremony were, the Head of Local Government Administration (HOLGA), Mrs. Okhiku Enomana, Treasurer of the Local Government, Mr. Felix Osawaru and several heads of Departments.

Ehis Agadagodo

Gov Obaseki Visits, Commiserates with Families of Late Victor Giwa-Osagie, Coach Sebastian Brodrick-Imasuen

...describes late patriarchs as generational changers, impactful contributors to national development



Edo State Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki, has paid condolence visits to the families of late Rilwan Victor Giwa-Osagie and late Coach Sebastian Brodrick-Imasuen, who passed on at the ages of 86 and 85 respectively, describing the late patriarchs as icons who changed the dynamics of their world, contributing meaningfully to the development of the state, and imparting their generations positively.

Obaseki who made the remarks in Benin City during his visits, on Monday 15th January 2024, stated that he was privileged to have encountered the awesome personalities of the late patriarchs, noting that the legacy they have left behind will continue to stand the test of time.

While condoling with the family of late Coach Sebastian Brodrick-Imasuen, Obaseki said: "I wish the family of the late departed legend, a happy new year, even though they are not in a happy mood, but we have to thank God for everything.

"We are here this afternoon to commiserate with you and to also support you at this very difficult period you are going through, and for the passing of your father and our football legend. We have so much to say about him just like the rest of the country. But I believe this is not the time to be eulogizing; when its time, we would do so.

"This afternoon we have decided to come and see you and to greet you, and to let you know that we heard the sad news of his passing, and we got your letter informing us of the arrangements that are being made.

"So, I thought because of the relationship we had with your dad, and his relationship with us in government and with the state, it is not just adequate writing to you and replying your letter, but that I should also come and see you personally and give you support, and to let you know that just like you miss him, I will also miss him".

Obaseki added: "What is important for us is that, he lived a very good life, he lived a purposeful life, he lived a life of impact.

He changed his generations and generations after him. He gave us confidence as a people and he dominated his world. He would always be remembered as a true hero and as a true icon of Edo State. We thank God for his life and we pray his soul will continue to rest in the bosom of the lord".

In his condolence remarks to the family of late Rilwan Victor Giwa-Osagie, Obaseki celebrated the late Icon, describing him as one who was able to successfully accomplish all he set out to do.

Obaseki said: "Good afternoon everybody, I heard the news on Saturday when I was traveling and I said as soon as I come in, one of the first things I will do is to come and see you and to express my condolences and that of the government and people of Edo State to you, on the passing of daddy, husband and father.

"Because, he was a legend; he was one of those we looked up to, particularly in terms of corporate community, in Benin City and Edo State.

"He was our equivalent of Akintola Williams here when he came to the accounting profession and anybody who had any serious business to do in the state enterprises, I think the first name they call to help them look at their books and keep their books is that of Giwa Osagie".

The Governor added: "We just need to celebrate his life, celebrate him, because he lived a good life, he accomplished all he set to do, he made his marks and set an example; a very good example for all of us, in ways to conduct ourselves, in the ways to live our lives and how to relate to one another".

In their appreciation, the families of the late patriarchs thanked Governor Obaseki for taking out time to visit and condole with them in their trying time.

Godspower Eguasa

How Governor Obaseki's Infrastructural Drive Transforms Iguobazuwa



In the annals of Iguobazuwa's history, the Community has undergone a remarkable transformation as the wind of change has swept through its once-overlooked streets; breathing new life into the heart of Ovia South-West Local Government Area. Governor Godwin Obaseki's infrastructural drive has become the catalyst for the positive change, and the people of Iguobazuwa now have a reason to celebrate a new found era of development in their Community.

For someone like me, who spent 18 years in Iguobazuwa, the metamorphosis is nothing short of astonishing. The major streets, including Imasabemwen, Ofunmwegbe, Akugbe, Bendel, Aruosa, amongst others, and the rehabilitation of Mission Road, bear witnesses to the tangible impact of Governor Obaseki's commitment to transforming the community. These streets, which were relegated to mere grading by local initiatives, have now been asphalted, marking a departure from the status quo which persisted for nearly three decades.

The State Government's increased presence in Iguobazuwa is evidence of Governor Obaseki's commitment to reversing the decades-long neglect that has plagued the Community. In addition to improving the physical infrastructure, the thorough road rehabilitation has completely changed the citizens' everyday lives. As someone who recently revisited the community, the transformation was so profound that I struggled to recognize the street where I once lived; a clear indication of the magnitude of the positive change that has taken place. The gratitude expressed by the people of Ovia South-West, particularly those in Iguobazuwa, is not just a fleeting sentiment but an enduring acknowledgment of Governor Obaseki's impact in their locality. The Community now stands out as a testament to what effective governance can achieve when driven by a genuine commitment to the welfare and development of the people.

As I reflect on the past, I recognize the significance of the present progress and look forward to the promise of a brighter future. The people of Iguobazuwa have been given a reason to hope, and their expectations are rightfully anchored in the continuation of Governor Obaseki's ideologies as well as his developmental strides. Governor Obaseki's infrastructural drive in Iguobazuwa has not only changed the narrative but has rewritten the story of a community that was long overdue for positive transformation. Now that the roads have been built, we must ensure sustainability, to enable the people of Iguobazuwa enjoy a long and prosperous period of development. Indeed, we have a good story to tell!

Aichienede Akhabue Goodluck

Obaseki Woos Aviation Investors with Edo's Business-Friendly Environment, as NG Eagle Makes Maiden Flight to Benin

...Edo records 9th airline operator



Edo State Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki has urged investors in the aviation sector to leverage Edo's business-friendly environment in driving laudable business partnerships and profitability in the aviation industry, stating that his administration will continue to ensure the availability of requisite infrastructures, security and other amenities to promote already existing markets in the state.

Obaseki made this known on the occasion of the maiden flight by NG Eagle Airline into the state, on December 13th 2023, at the Benin Airport. This is coming 24 hours after United Nigeria Airlines made their inaugural flight to Edo, making NG Eagle the 9th airline operator in the state. Obaseki said: "Businesses are coming to Edo because we have created the right environment for businesses to thrive. There is security, there is infrastructure and there is a market."

"So, people who are in a business like transportation, particularly aviation, have come to realize that because of what we have done over the last seven years, there are opportunities in Edo State, particularly for transportation."

"When we came in 2016, we had only one airline coming into Benin City, flying into this airport. Today, NG Eagle makes it the ninth airline to be flying into Edo State. Another airline did its inaugural flight yesterday."

Obaseki noted that his government has consistently put pressure on the owners of aircrafts and also the aviation authorities, to ease the burden of citizens of the state, as flight tickets to Benin City, are perhaps the most expensive in the country because of shortage of operators.

According to Obaseki, "People pay as much as N250,000 just to fly economy; for a 30-minute flight to Benin City. And we have been very worried about that as a government, and that is why we have gone around to encourage other airlines to come into this route so that we can crash the fares into Benin, particularly during this Yuletide holiday."

The Governor further stated that the state government is working with the aviation authorities to improve the airport experience. "I was in Abuja yesterday to talk to the Nigerian Airspace Management Agency (NAMA) and we are working with them to improve the runway lights so that planes can come and land even late at night."

"We are also working with them to improve electricity and also communications with the towers. So, with all that we are doing, I am sure airlines will like to come to Edo because, you know, everything is here", Obaseki said.

In his address, the Chairman of NG Eagle Airline, Mr. Abdullahi Ahmed, assured of his commitment to providing seamless and efficient transport service to the people of Edo State.

Ahmed While commending Governor Obaseki for his support in ensuring the successful actualization of their operation in the state, expressed optimism at the ready market available in Edo, noting that the Airline management is ready to serve Edo citizens and residents at more affordable rates than their competitors.

Ahmed said: "We just started operation on the 10th of December, but today is the first day. It is our first flight to Benin and we are happy with the reception we have seen here from His Excellency, and we always appreciate His Excellency's support and audience. I can promise you, we will sell our tickets cheap, here in Benin."

Godspower Eguasa



EDSG to support Angel Osariemen in Quest to Win Guinness World Record.



Edo State Government under the leadership of Governor Godwin Obaseki has pledged to support Ms. Angel Osariemen Asein, a five hundred level Fishery student of the University of Lagos(LASU) and a diploma holder of Marine Engineering from the University of Benin (UNIBEN)who has secured the approval from Guinness Book of Record to read aloud for two hundred (200) hours in a Read Aloud Marathon. This disclosure was made during a press briefing by the Commissioner for Communication and Orientation, Mr. Chris Nehikhare at the Ministry's premises in Benin City.

Mr. Nehikhare commended Ms. Asein for taking the bold step, describing Edo Youths as resilient goal getters. He stated that the theme would be an interesting one, as Ms. Asein intends to read sixty percent of Edo history on how it was developed, with its arts and culture, imploring Edo people to come out and cheer her up from the 23rd of February to the 3rd of March, 2024 at the Edo State Library, at the Secretariat complex.

On her part, Ms. Asein thanked Edo State Government, Edo people, her family and her team for their immense support, adding that her motive for attempting on the longest reading aloud marathon was to promote the arts and culture of Edo State and Nigeria at large as well as to encourage reading culture among the younger generation. In attendance were, the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Communication and Orientation, Dr. Desmond Agbama, the Director of Communication, Mr. Daniel Odion, amongst others.

Ilobekemen Mary

Special Adviser on Youth Affairs Seeks Police Collaboration on Tackling Secret Cult Killings in Edo State



In a proactive move to address the rising concerns of secret cult-related violence in Edo State, the Special Adviser to Edo State Governor on Youth Affairs, Hon. Shadrach Udugbai, accompanied by the leadership of some civil society groups, has paid visit to the Edo State Commissioner of Police, Funsho Adegboye, in Benin City.

Hon. Udugbai expressed deep concerns over the increasing menace of cult killings in recent times and its detrimental impact on the safety and well-being of youth population in the State. The dialogue emphasized the urgent need for collaborative efforts between the government and law enforcement agencies to curb the escalating violence.

Speaking with journalists following the meeting, the Special Adviser on Youth Affairs highlighted the importance of a joint approach, stating, "The State Governor is deeply committed to ensuring the safety and security of every citizen in Edo State, especially our youth. We cannot stand idly by while cult-related violence continues to claim lives and disrupt the peace within our communities."

The Commissioner of Police, who welcomed the initiative, assured Hon. Udugbai of the Police commitment in tackling the issue head-on. He acknowledged the gravity of the situation, emphasizing the need for a multi-faceted strategy that involves intelligence gathering, community engagement, and rigorous law enforcement.

"We appreciate the collaboration with the state government, and together, we will work tirelessly to identify and apprehend those responsible for these heinous crimes. The Governor has given us clear instructions and the go-ahead to arrest and prosecute those involved in these crimes no matter who they may be in society. Our goal is to create a safer environment for all residents in Edo State. Our doors are always open and we will appreciate any information that is genuine, viable and actionable", CP Adegboye noted.

The proposed collaboration is expected to involve joint task forces, increased intelligence sharing, and community outreach programs aimed at educating and sensitizing the youth on the dangers of cultism.

The Special Adviser and the Commissioner of Police urged residents to actively support the efforts by providing information that could lead to the apprehension of individuals or groups, who are involved in secret cult activities.

As Edo State unites against the menace of secret cult-related violence, the collaborative effort between the government and law enforcement agencies signals a resolute commitment to restoring peace and security in the State. The stakeholders involved are optimistic that the partnership will yield positive results in curbing the menace of secret cult killings and fostering a safer environment for youths in the State.

Portia Osayande



EDSPHCDA in Partnership with M-RITE Holds Media Engagement on Covid-19 Vaccination



The Edo State Primary Health Care Development Agency (EDSPHCDA) in partnership with Momentum Routine Immunization Transformation and Equity (M-RITE), has held a two-day engagement with the media in the State to heighten awareness regarding the significance of getting vaccinated against COVID-19. The two-day sessions was held in the conference room of the Edo State Council of the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), drawing journalists from various media organisations in Benin City.

In a remark, the Director of the Department of Community and Family Health Services of EDSPHCDA, Dr. Idemudia Osayomore, emphasized that the COVID-19 virus is highly prevalent, which according to him, underscored his Agency's dedication to ensuring public health resilience in the State. He highlighted the crucial roles of journalists in collaborating with the Agency to promote awareness regarding the significance of widespread vaccination. Dr. Osayomore noted that the effectiveness of the primary health sector's efforts hinges on public awareness, emphasizing that if the community remains uninformed, it signifies lack of meaningful enlightenment on the part of the health care service providers.

In addressing prevailing misconceptions about the COVID-19 vaccine, particularly concerns regarding its perceived danger to human health and the applicability only within specific age brackets, Dr. Osayomore stated, "The COVID-19 vaccine is safe and very effective. The Vaccine is given to 16 years old and above and not to children." The State Health Educator, EDSPHCDA, Mrs. Irene Uabor, spoke on the risk perception and communication as it relates to COVID-19, decrying how some persons have spread unfounded rumours about the virus. She dismissed such frivolous claims and described them as baseless and misleading.

On the COVID-19 vaccination update by the Director of Planning, Research and Statistics, Mrs. Esther Ajayi, who gave a cumulative summary of the COVID-19 vaccinations as at 19th November 2023, as insight on the total eligible population targeted for COVID-19 vaccination in the following categories: total eligible population given first dose; total eligible population given second dose; total eligible population partially vaccinated; total eligible population so far vaccinated with booster dose (1st and 2nd); total eligible population given J & J full dose; and total eligible population fully vaccinated. Mrs. Ajayi submitted that the proportion of eligible population partially vaccinated against COVID-19 is 1.4% while, the proportion of eligible population fully vaccinated is 58.1%. She stressed the significance of journalists leveraging social media to disseminate accurate information and to counteract rumors.

The State Lead of M-RITE, Mrs. Maureen Anyanwu in her remarks, noted that they work with the EDSPHCDA to strengthen routine immunization and other primary health care initiatives in the State. She stated "The media have to correct the misinformation out there, to help us drive the number from 58.1%, where we currently are, to 70% so that the risk of COVID-19 will be greatly reduced." Highpoint of the sessions was the address by the Chairman of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Edo State Council, Comrade Festus Alenkhe, where he emphasized that the significance of the gathering was to remind journalists that COVID-19 has not disappeared but has merely diminished. He underscored the importance of raising awareness among the public and admonished on the need for journalists to take measures to boost their own immunity against the virus.

Wisdom Agbonta

Edo State Govt Seals #228b Deal with Triple A Infrastructure, InfraCorp for Reconstruction of Benin-Asaba Expressway (Contd.)



"So, it is a transaction we believe in and a transaction that is very core to the economy of our state. That is why we as a state have no hesitation whatsoever to also invest some of our money in that road. We have already started investing; we have spent close to almost a billion naira just remediating the road, and now that we have been offered equity shares in the concession of this road, I want to commit that the Edo State Government will invest in this concession to fast track the process and any other concessions on roads that go through Edo State."

Governor Obaseki congratulated the African Plus Partners on securing the bid while emphasizing the need for swift action, in order to end the prolonged suffering of the people, urging them to factor in the seasonal irregularities while expediting actions on the project.

"Having started with this project, I just want to implore you to ensure that we fast track the construction so that people see that it is real. The rainy seasons are now very long. We have up to nine to ten months of rainy season in a year, which reduces the length of dry season, needed for construction. So my advice is that this is taken into consideration. We know you have experience, from what you have done for other parts of the world, particularly Latin America, and that experience should be brought to bear on the construction of this modern highway", Obaseki said.

While urging sustained partnership between states and the federal government, the Governor emphasized the urgent need by the federal Ministry of Works to terminate all contracts on the Benin-Auchi road and transition them to a concession model, noting that the federal government lacks the substantial funds required for the comprehensive reconstruction of federal roads.

Obaseki noted: "And I just also hope that the federal Ministry of Works should consider very urgently the need to terminate the contracts on the Benin-Auchi road and put up that road for concession and the Edo State Government will support that initiative because that is the way to go. Let us tell ourselves the truth, the federal government does not have the kind of money required to rebuild these roads to the standards they should be."

Speaking during the event, the Chief Executive Officer of Triple A Infrastructure, Mr. Ike Chioke, expressed delight with the partnership, appreciating the Governor's support for the project. Chioke remarked: "We are delighted with the opportunity to partner with Edo State Government. We are delighted to lend support to this project which would be the first out of the nine HDMI roads that have been concessioned. It is the testament to the resilience and doggedness of our Africa Plus Partners."

Also speaking, the Managing Director of Africa Plus Partners, Mr. Adeniran Ajakaiye noted: "Africa Plus Partners, through a consultative effort with promoters, successfully acquired the concession for the Benin-Asaba expressway from the federal Ministry of Works. An achievement that followed an extensive process of international bidding, where the consortium emerged victorious.

"The project entails expanding and upgrading the road to meet world-class standard, including the development of sections with ten and eight lanes, respectively. Edo State's participation as an equity investor is a commendable step towards collaborative and effective transactions.

"In partnership with Delta State, InfraCorp and Triple A, our major funders, we are grateful for their contributions in both debt and equity. With the involvement of Pension Fund Administrators (PFAs) providing equity, the completion of this road will establish it as a world-class asset benefiting both states and facilitating seamless connectivity to the east and west regions of the country."

The signing ceremony had in attendance; Secretary to Edo State Government, Osarodion Ogie Esq.; Edo State Commissioner for Roads and Bridges, Ethan Uzamere; Edo State Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice, Barr Oluwole Osaze-Uzzi; Edo State Commissioner for Communication and Orientation, Chris Nehikhare, and other senior government officials.

John Ewah and Violet Obamwonyi

Edo State Govt Investing on 'Clean & Green' to Combat Climate Change – Omokhodion



The Edo State Commissioner for Environment and Sustainability, Arc. Joshua Omokhodion has stated that the State Government's commitment to the beautification of the environment is not only to curtail the issues of waste and dirt around the city centres, but to also mitigate the impact of climate change.

Arc. Omokhodion made the statement in Benin City, through the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry, Mr. Jude Ekpu, during a three-day training programme for personnel of the Department of Parks and Garden in the Ministry. According to the Commissioner, the training is aimed at preparing the staff as part of buildups towards the beautification of Edo State.

The Commissioner described the training exercise as timely, which according to him, will bring about the establishment of more recreational centres in the State, preparing the State to be the best place to live and do business by the year 2030.

In his remark, the Consultant of Edo State One Stop for Investment Promotion, Mr. Joel Edionwe, emphasized the need to attach importance to the esthetics and redesigning of the environment, noting that our surroundings showcase how we want people to see us and the value we attach to our lives. He cautioned that Environmental Health and Management is very sacrosanct as the whole world is crying about climate change.

Mr. Edionwe acknowledged Governor Godwin Obaseki's commitment towards keeping the State clean and green. He applauded the Governor's numerous engagements and interventions as well as the vision to redeem and redirect the environment in order to mitigate the consequence of climate change, especially in urban areas where nine parks and gardens have been contracted.

The Consultant of Parks and Garden, Roland Ologun said the training was to prepare staff of Parks and Garden for the task of Beautifying the State. The programme featured lectures on Landscaping and Horticulture, Methods of Ornamental Propagation and Soil Profiling, Wreath, Flower Bouquet and Cut Flowers Arrangement, Nursery Management, and Herbal Uses of Ornament Plants, as delivered by Mr. Egah, Prof. S. U. Ewansiha, Mrs. Ngozi Nzekwu, TPL. Mbachu Chika and S. P. Odigie, respectively.

Trainees were taken on guided tours to three gardens across the Benin city metropolis, which included Obe Garden on Sapele Road; Garden of Fortunes on Benin Technical College Road; and Pa. Odigie's Garden at Aduwawa.

High Point of the three days training programme was the presentation of Ornament trees to the trainees by the Nigerian Institute of Landscaping and Beautification, as well as the presentation of certificates to participants who were successful at the examinations.

Orumwense Sarah O.

Obaseki Says Policy Making, Important Function of Govt, as Edo Drafts Housing Policy, Holds Stakeholders Workshop



Edo State Governor, Mr. Godwin Obaseki, has said that one of the most important functions of government is policy making. He made this remark on Tuesday January 30 2024, during an Internal Stakeholders Workshop for the Edo State Housing Policy, which held at the John Odigie Oyegun Public Service Academy (JOOPSA), in Benin City.

While addressing participants at the event, Obaseki commended the Edo State Housing Policy Committee, headed by Prof. P.S. Ogedegbe, for their effort thus far in putting together a draft of the policy.

Speaking on the importance of policy making in governance, Obaseki said: "Most times in government, the operators of government do not seem to understand their purpose. They think that their purpose is the contracts that are awarded, the things that are built, the things you see. If you are not building roads, or building schools, or taking some specific physical actions, they think you are not doing anything."

"They do not realize that the most important function of government is thinking, setting in place a policy, a direction, a compass, on where we should be going. That is more important than anything else. It is only when you have set in place a correct policy that other actors now begin to play their own parts."

Obaseki stressed that this important aspect of governance that deals with policy making has been diminished, as many see it as theoretical, which then leads to disparity and lack of cohesion in the different segments of governance, because there is no common ground for actions.

"One of the things we want to be remembered for is that when we came into government, we brought the brain of government back into government, so that government can start to think again for us. It is that process of thinking that creates a plan, and creates actions by an internal executor", he added.

Addressing the participants on the Edo State Housing Policy, the Governor charged them to own and internalize it, taking it into consideration while delivering government services to the people.

According to Obaseki, "One of the most important policies we must leave behind is this document, which summarizes and puts together how we live in our physical space."

"After now, everybody who is part of this must take ownership and contribute to it to have something final. It must be your 'Bible' by which everybody works."

The Ministry of Roads and Bridges cannot and should not build any road without reference to this document; neither should the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Health decide to build schools or hospitals without thinking through what the housing policy is; how whatever they are doing is going to affect other peers in the ecosystem."

"This draft you are displaying today will just be a piece of paper, another document, if it is owned, internalized, and executed. I do not want a master plan in the traditional sense of a master plan."

A master plan is not a document that a consultant produces and gives to you. A master plan is your own plan that you have mastered.

"Subsequent generations will know that this is how we do things. It is part of a culture that we have lost, and it is really going to be difficult building it. That is what I want you to take away. It is not going to be easy. It is about resetting our minds".

Nosakhare Agbonigiarhuoyi



CRIME WATCH - A SECURITY REPORT SERIES

Hausa-Fulani Community Commends Gov Obaseki for Inclusive Governance, as Obaseki Attributes Increase in Crime to Nation's Economic Hardship

...says Edo is fighting crime with strong local community policing architecture



The Executive Governor of Edo State, Mr. Godwin Obaseki, has stated that the sudden but temporary rise in crime in the state is not specifically targeted at the Hausa-Fulani community, instead, attributed it to the challenges faced by the people due to the inflationary pressure in the country's economy. The Governor made this known during a courtesy visit by members of the Hausa-Fulani community to Edo State Government House in Benin City, on 30th January 2024.

Governor Obaseki who welcomed the representatives of the Community and expressed his commitment to inclusive governance, stressed on the significant role the Community plays in state's economic landscape, citing the profound contributions they have made to the state. The Governor conveyed his appreciation for the enduring bonds formed over time while assuring that his administration does not take the community for granted.

According to Obaseki, "I am very happy and glad with the way you have organized yourselves, that is the way communities should be organized. You look after each other and you also care and participate in the communities where you settle. That is the hallmark of being good citizens. Apart from that, we know that the aspect of the economy that you are handling is so vital. That is why we do not joke with you. I always come to your place, see what you are doing, make sure that everything is okay."

Addressing the concerns surrounding the security of the Hausa-Fulani community in Edo State, Obaseki dispelled rumors of targeted attacks on the community, attributing the rise in crime to broader societal issues.

"I heard in some security report about some attacks, but from what I found, it was not targeted at any member of the Hausa-Fulani community. The problem we are having is a general increase in crime in the society and I know this because we are the ones that get all the reports. And we can see that as things are getting more and more difficult, many people are now looking for ways to cope and many are committing crimes", Obaseki noted.

The Governor also remarked that with the increasing incidence of crime across the country, particularly in cases of kidnapping and homicide, the state has established a security alert system, and given directive to all vigilante groups to be registered, trained and granted access to the newly implemented 24/7 automated Command and Control Center for swift response to emergencies.

Obaseki said: "We have tried in our own way to reorganize our own security arrangements, that is why we brought the vigilante to ensure policing for communities mostly at the local level. We know the Inspector General cannot know all that is happening in Edean, even the Divisional Police Officer cannot know everything all the time. That is why we brought the vigilante, and you will agree with me that by and large they have been doing well.

"But like in everything in life, you cannot be perfect; there can be issues in some areas. So part of what I decided yesterday is to make sure that we disband any vigilante group that we have not trained. So, before any vigilante group can operate in any area, first, the DPO would have registered them and then we will train them in the Police College in Ogida.

"We have repaired that place to train people, and we train 1,500 at a time. And we cooperate with the local governments with their training. We have trained 6,500 till date and we are training more. It is a continuous process as we need to know them and educate them on what to do. So, we can reduce the sort of situation that you have complained about. And if anyone misbehaves, we can trace them. And they know that they would be held accountable and responsible for their actions."

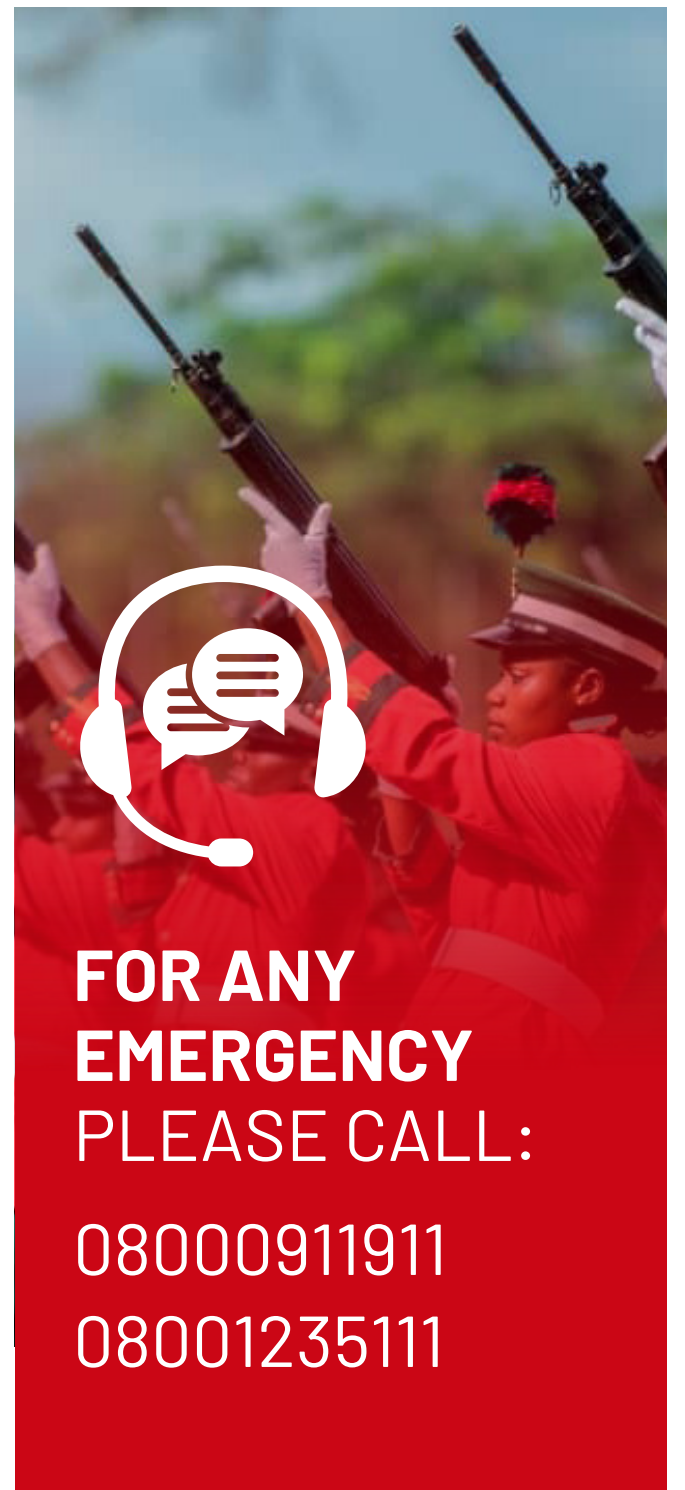
Obaseki added: "At this time of the year, when there is migration of people coming with their cattle to look for grazing land, sometimes bad people come pretending to be herders. Some of them carry guns to kill and hurt people in villages but that has never led to reprisal attacks in Edo State. We try to figure out the people who have done it and you people have cooperated with us to find the people who have committed crimes and we deal with them."

Assuring them of the state's commitment to their safety amidst the prevailing security concerns, Governor Obaseki said: "I want to assure you that we do not take matters concerning you lightly, because we know how important you are to us in Edo. We know you are peaceful people. From what is going on across the country, increase in kidnapping, homicide, even with our location and position, we do not see how we can escape from it, but what we are doing, is to prepare for it. In fact, yesterday morning, I had a special meeting and decided to create a security alert in Edo State."

"So, anything you see let us know, we now have a fully automated command and control center mounted 24/7. Any emergency just call 112 or 739 and instantly we will be able to get help to the people. Anything that is going on now, is just part of the general increase in criminal activities, nothing targeted at the Hausa community in Edo State. Continue to help us use your network, continue to work with us and do your business peacefully in the state as you have always done. Nothing has changed in our relationship," Obaseki added.

Also in attendance was the Honorable commissioner, Ministry of Public Safety and Security, Mr. Kingsley Uwagbale; Coordinator, Edo State Security Vigilante Network, Col. Kole Oshoriamhe Omomia (Rtd), top government officials, members of the Hausa-Fulani community, among others.

Violet Osatohanmwun Obamwonyi



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