

Indigenous but Ingenious: Assuming an active role in change.

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1. OURSTATUSQUO

When I sleep tonight, over 19million infants and youths in my nation will sleep in with no expectation of succeeding the following day. About 4% of them will die of starvation and terminal diseases before tomorrow morning¹.

I'm not ashamed to describe the pathetic situation in the most rural areas of my nation where poverty, terminal diseases and unemployment are dominant. Issues of social decadence, malnutrition and abject penury are apparently impossible to eradicate. Infant mortality rate due to these menaces have thus increased.

Little wonder! Nigeria claims an estimated population of 154,729,000; most populous in Africa and eighth most populous of about 225 countries in the world². About 45% of the population is in their working ages, however a high percentage of Nigerians either unemployed or underemployed. Even in the urban areas, unemployment rates are of high figures. Productivity is thus pitifully low.

The Nigerian economy depends majorly on the capital-intensive oil sector, which provides 80% of GDP³, 95% of foreign exchange earnings, and about 70% of government revenues⁴. Nigeria is one of the largest oil-producing nations, unfortunately, only about five percent of the population is employed with the oil industry. Foreigners are believed to be the "saving grace" for our predicament. For about 50 years, this is still where we are: ranked 151 out of 177 countries in the United Nations Development Index of countries in the world!⁵ Our potentially-rich economy has long been hobbled by political instability, corruption, and poor macroeconomic management; a negligible percentage of

1 <http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/nigeria_statistics.html>; <http://www.indexmundi.com/nigeria/infant_mortality_rate.html>

2 http://www.wikipedia.com/List_of_countries_by_population.htm

3 Gross Domestic Product

4 http://www.wikipedia.com/wiki/Economy_of_Nigeria.htm

5 ibid

our resources are processed in Nigeria. There are therefore no job opportunities for graduates. Almost all exports are unprocessed! Nigeria's major trade partners for exports are the United States, India, Spain, France, and Brazil who has the indigenous technological infrastructures and human resources to process these raw materials. Moreover, most products are imported by Nigeria; even the finished products of our initial exports.

Citizens' participation in building the nation is not encouraged, human capital is thus underdeveloped. Nigeria has a pretty high literacy rate of 71%⁶, however we seek help from less-advantaged nations (in terms of human and capital resources) when our "miracles" lies within us. The chips are down, and there is no better time to act than now. No better people to act than indigenous youths and adults. No better approaches than ingenious indigenous solutions geared towards sustainable socioeconomic and political development. Fortunately, the governments at all levels are coming to recognize that promoting citizens participation in National development will yield tangible development, and that is the drive for my thoughtful propositions.

2. Citizen participation: Assuming an active role in change.

Implementation of practical solutions and the involvement of indigenous human resources are the viable answers to Nigeria's problems. We must all recognize the peculiarities of our predicament and not timidly deceive ourselves by adopting facsimiles of advanced nations. However, we should take lessons from developed nations like USA, Japan, China and Singapore whose developments were accountable only to the unrelenting participation of the citizens under strict supervision by the governments. Indigenous solutions through active citizens' participation are the actual "magic" any nation need for rapid development.

I hereby present my initiatives in proposition to make Nigerians act collaboratively with great enthusiasm; hope, confidence, and commitment to unravel the destructive effects of poverty and unemployment by proposing sustainable solutions to the problems. My submissions are a mixture of the past practical steps undertaken that yielded tangible developments, and proven panaceas for rapid economic and socio-political growth harnessing indigenous human resources.

6 Stock, Robert. "Nigeria." Microsoft Student 2008 [DVD]. Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation, 2008.

A. Total Youth Empowerment Scheme (TYES)

In recognition of the need to actively involve the youths in National Development, I hereby submit my Youth Empowerment Scheme.

I founded the TYES in June, 2008. The voluntary organization is a group of unemployed youths, students and handicaps with a common purpose of improving youths' self-awareness and productivity. Individuals employed as either project or full staffs, are strictly youths with an ounce of creativity. There are also numerous youths who participate as volunteers in different projects. For 21 months, TYES has been involved in collaborative youth-development trainings, voluntary civic responsibilities, job creation, and education programs.

Past Projects and Achievements of TYES

Human Capacity Development Trainings in Schools, Religious houses, and social organizations. Trainings are strategically organized for specific groups of people based on their perceived needs. Apart from the employment opportunities created for the team members, skills are also acquired in project management, events planning, interpersonal relationships and leadership as they offer their creativity in planning different training programs.

Trainings include: Technical, Vocational, Entrepreneurship and Business Management, Financial Education, Wealth creation, and Parents Training Programs.

Proposed Initiatives for TYES

Total Youth Education Team (TYET)

In Nigeria, employers complain that graduates are poorly prepared for work. They believe that academic standards have fallen considerably at all levels of education, and that a university degree is no longer a guarantee of communication or technical competence. These concerns have prompted the TYET initiative. It seeks to answer questions regarding the levels of youth preparedness for productive employment.

The team of indigenous youths will participate in the review of the educational syllabuses at all levels and introduce courses in Business and Project Manage-

ment, Emotional Intelligence, Entrepreneurship, Vocational Studies and Financial Education. To achieve this, students will be asked to submit their suggestions via physical submissions, posting, and e-mails annually. These inputs will be reviewed by the team and submitted to the state and federal ministries of education.

School for the less privileged:

The human resource needed to implement solution-providing initiatives is not defined mainly in physical fitness but in cleverness. The TYES intends to establish a schooling system for street children, disabled, orphans and indigenous youths. The school will have inter-dependent departments of admissions and administration, training, production, process development, sales and marketing, project management and health education. In the short run, the project will be sponsored by our gold and silver partners and the departments will be headed by the TYES teams. A trial implementation will be established in Sabo community in Ile-Ife city. The successful implementation will lead its implementation in other communities. All the departments in the school will collaborate to: implement community projects; provide good jobs for the less privileged; train youths across the community; and produce tangible products for use by the populace.

Women in Development Strategy (WIDS)

The dichotomy of male versus female capability is still a misconception plaguing my nation. In effect, the female generation naturally feels inferior, and this has delimited their participation in community empowerment. WIDS is a platform to correct this delusion. The females in the TYES will team up and act collaboratively to make useful contributions to National Development. Trainings will be organized to correct the inferiority complex that had drained their creativity and restore women's active participation in nation's development.

Youths in Politics (YP)

Governments have been advised to continuously evaluate their youth policy, and involve young people in the evaluation⁷. The Youths in Politics are thus proposed as the representatives of the TYES team in the State and Federal

7 <<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/wyr05.htm>>

house of assembly meetings. They will submit and defend a youth-perspective developmental document - the Youth Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (YEEDS) to be review and incorporated in the states and federal development plans. This will undoubtedly increase the youths' participation in decision-making of the country.

B. Community Developers Camp (CDC).

The Community Developers Camp is a program designed to consistently improve the knowledge, life skills and gender awareness of Nigerians to better prepare them to make healthy and productive choices regarding their education, health and civic participation. CDC recognizes that human capital development does not only require building a knowledge base through formal education, but also requires providing citizens with the skills to build their self-confidence and decision-making abilities.

The camp is a four day program where different local and national companies are invited to be partners in either the platinum, silver or gold levels. The partnership initiative is a win-win concept which is prerequisite to the participation of companies in the program. Trainings are conducted in camps of different knowledge areas. Camps may include Information Technology, Business and Entrepreneurship, Vocational, Political, Civic responsibilities, and Health. The common aim set for the program is being approached in different perspectives by different camps.

The 2010 edition focused on "Citizens' participation in the realization of Nigeria's Vision 2020". The first day was given to "training the trainers". This is meant to cater for the language and cultural differences of participants since participation is opened to citizens from different cultures of the nation. The second and third days were dedicated to the camp trainings. The last day was meant for civic activities. Every participant and indigenous companies performed responsibilities like environmental sanitation, and HIV/AIDS eradication evangelism. Best performances on the Civic day were commendably rewarded.

The implementing partners were also built around program implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The companies will be sensitizing their communities on the CDC project and the importance of civic participation in development. The project is also building sustained support through the creation of Local Project Support Committees, which will implement support activities in various communities. The plan is to reach 20 communities every year.

3. CONCLUSION

The future of our nation lies in our hands. What we do about it today is vital to what we will all become tomorrow. We cannot afford to be complacent; we must act, now!

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