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Our Nigeria

Out of Many, One (e pluribus unum)

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A Soldier-Scholar Who Built, Bridged and Bettered Nigeria

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Rebuilding Hope:

How the North-East Development Commission Is Recasting Life After Conflict

ISSN 2756-5521

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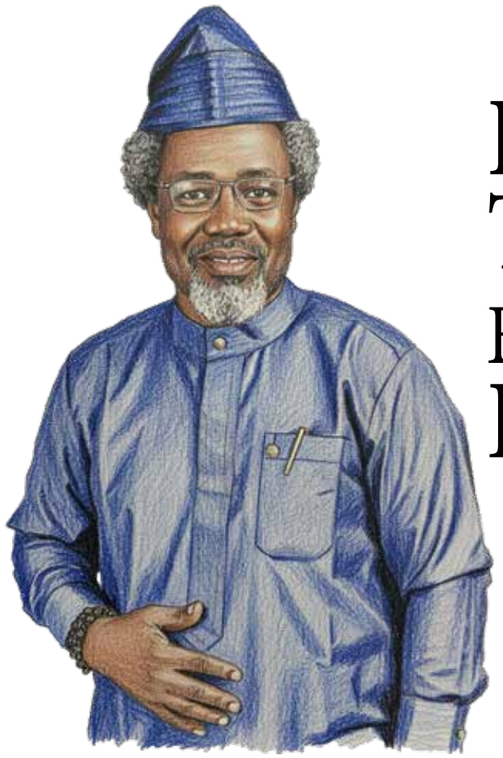

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Nigeria is often described through its crises, yet it is in moments of recovery that the true measure of a nation's character is revealed. This edition of OurNigeria is anchored on one such moment: the slow, complex, but deeply consequential work of rebuilding hope. From the North-East's long road from insurgency to renewal, to debates about governance, security, culture, and accountability, the stories in these pages reflect a country wrestling with its wounds while daring to imagine a better future.

Our cover story on the North-East Development Commission (NEDC) is not merely an institutional profile; it is a meditation on what recovery means after prolonged conflict. Roads rebuilt, clinics reopened, schools rehabilitated, and livelihoods restored are tangible markers of progress. Yet beyond infrastructure lies a more delicate task: restoring dignity, trust, and confidence in the promise of the Nigerian state.

Development, as this issue repeatedly shows, is not only about projects delivered, but about lives stabilised and futures reclaimed . Across the magazine, a recurring question emerges: how do institutions sustain credibility in a time of deep public skepticism? Whether in discussions on security sector reform, ambassadorial screenings, political defections, or youth engagement through the arts, one truth stands firm—process matters. When procedures lose substance, when accountability gives way to convenience, or when power eclipses principle, democracy is weakened from within. Conversely, when transparency, competence, and inclusion are taken seriously, even fragile systems can regain legitimacy.

This edition also celebrates culture and ideas as instruments of nation-building. From literature and theatre to visual arts and youth-led initiatives, we reaffirm that development is incomplete without imagination. Nations do not advance by policy alone; they move forward when citizens are inspired to see themselves as stakeholders in a shared story.

OurNigeria remains committed to thoughtful journalism that interrogates power without cynicism and celebrates progress without complacency. We believe that hope is not naïve optimism but a disciplined insistence that Nigeria can do better—by its people, for its regions, and for generations yet unborn.

As you turn these pages, we invite you to read not as a spectator, but as a participant in the ongoing task of rebuilding Nigeria—patiently, critically, and with resolve.

Om'Oba Jerry Adesewo

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For the Record

7.12% Is a Choice
Nigeria | Education

Nigeria allocates just 7.12% of its federal budget to education while hosting over 18 million out-of-school children, the highest globally. This is not a funding gap—it is a policy statement with generational consequences.

Nigeria | Economy
Debt Without Development

Nigeria's public debt crossed ₦121.6 trillion in 2024, yet infrastructure decay and social services persist. Borrowing is rising faster than outcomes, raising the uncomfortable question: where exactly is the debt working?

Africa | Security
Coups and Consequences

Since 2020, Africa has recorded over 10 successful or attempted coups, mostly in fragile democracies. Weak institutions, youth disenfranchisement, and economic stress—not ideology—are proving to be the real coup enablers.a growth rate of 24.99% on a quarter-on-quarter basis.

The World | Power Shift
Multipolar Reality

The US dollar's share of global reserves has fallen below 60%, while BRICS economies now account for over 30% of global GDP (PPP). The world is not ending—but Western dominance is no longer assumed.

Africa | Demography
Youthful, Jobless, Restless

Africa's median age is 19, but youth unemployment exceeds 30% in several countries. Without urgent investment in skills, agriculture, and creative industries, the continent's demographic advantage risks becoming its greatest instability.

Africa | Leadership Paradox
A Young Continent, Ageing Power

Africa is the world's youngest continent, with a median age between 18 and 25, yet political power remains concentrated among some of the oldest and longest-serving leaders globally. In Cameroon, President Paul Biya, 92, has ruled since 1982. In Equatorial Guinea, Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, 82, has been in power since 1979, making him the world's longest-serving president. Uganda is led by Yoweri Museveni, 80, in office since 1986. Meanwhile, Guinea-Bissau exemplifies leadership recycling and instability amid a predominantly youthful population. This stark generational mismatch fuels frustration, migration pressures, protest movements, and, in some regions, coups—underscoring a democratic deficit where youthful societies are governed by ageing power structures.one NSVT gun, one GT3 rifle, 25 AK47 rifles, four pump-action shotguns, and two locally manufactured AK47 rifles.

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REBUILDING HOPE:

How the North-East Development Commission is Recasting Life After Conflict

By Matthew Eloyi

When the **North-East Development Commission (NEDC)** was established through an Act of the National Assembly and signed into law in 2017, it was born out of one of the darkest chapters in Nigeria's history. For over a decade, the North-East had endured the devastating effects of insurgency, which displaced millions, destroyed towns and villages, decimated infrastructure, and shattered the social and economic fabric of communities across **Borno, Adamawa, Bauchi, Gombe, Taraba, and Yobe States**. Schools were turned into camps for internally displaced persons, hospitals were destroyed, farmlands were abandoned, and entire markets vanished under the weight of conflict. In response to this humanitarian and developmental crisis, the Federal Government recognised that rebuilding the region required more than emergency relief; it demanded a coordinated, long-term institutional framework to restore hope, infrastructure, livelihoods, and dignity. Thus, the NEDC was created not just as a federal agency, but as a symbol of national resolve — a blueprint for recovery and renewal in a region long defined by loss, now determined to be known for resilience and reconstruction. Over the years, the Commission has evolved from a crisis-response institution into a driver of sustainable development, weaving together humanitarian aid, infrastructure rebuilding, and economic empowerment to give the people of the North-East a new narrative of hope and progress.

Eight years on, the Commission's imprint is visible across the region: repaired roads, functioning primary healthcare centres, rehabilitated schools, agricultural inputs for farmers, surgical eye camps that restored sight to thousands, and an ambitious 10-year master plan that maps recovery through 2030. Those achievements are substantial, but so are the expectations, the logistical hurdles and the political scrutiny. This is the story of an institution trying to turn emergency relief into durable development.

From Law to Landscape: What NEDC Is and How It Works

The NEDC was established by an Act of the National Assembly and empowered to plan, implement and coordinate development projects

across the North-East. Its remit explicitly links humanitarian recovery with longer-term socio-economic revival: infrastructure repair, livelihoods, health, education, and digital and physical connectivity. The Commission's planning instrument — the North-East Stabilisation & Development Master Plan (NESDMP) — sets out a phased approach to recovery through 2030, separating immediate stabilisation from renewal and transformation phases.

Structure wise, NEDC combines a governing board and an executive management team that oversee directorates for operations, projects, humanitarian affairs and finance. The Commission maintains a state-level presence through coordinators to ensure local engagement and project delivery. Its legal framework gives it latitude to coordinate state governments, federal agencies, donors and private contractors — a necessary authority in a region where rebuilding demands many hands.

The Commission maintains a state-level presence through coordinators to ensure local engagement and project delivery.

NEDC's mandate is ambitious and correspondingly capital-intensive. The Commission has identified a multi-trillion-naira financing need to fully implement the 10-year master plan. The scale of that requirement has pushed NEDC to combine federal allocations with multilateral financing and partnerships. One key relationship has been the World Bank's Multi-Sectoral Crisis Recovery Project (MCRP), which channels funds for rehabilitation and resilience projects in the most affected states and counts NEDC among its implementing partners. Such partnerships add both finance and standards, but they also require tighter procurement, reporting and safeguards.

Taken together, NEDC's project portfolio is broad. The Commission's website and project data list hundreds of projects — from road repairs and bridge construction to health centre rehabilitation, school rebuilding and support for local agricultural value chains. The Commission has also emphasized "digital public goods" in governance and sought to accelerate skills and livelihood programmes for youth.

Highlights reported in national media and by the Commission include:

- **Roads and bridges:** Dozens of roads and bridges have been repaired or constructed to reconnect markets and towns. These works are frequently cited as enabling trade and humanitarian access across remote areas.

- **Health interventions:** NEDC has invested in primary healthcare centres and carried out high-impact medical outreach. Reporting credits the Commission with thousands of minor surgical interventions, including cataract surgeries and other sight-restoring procedures carried out through dedicated medical missions — a targeted approach that directly improves quality of life and economic productivity.

- **Education and schools:** Rehabilitation of schools and provision of learning materials have been key. Reopening schools not only restores education but signals the return of normalcy for children and families. NEDC's collaborations with state education ministries aim to shorten the gap between emergency relief and a functioning education system.

- **Agriculture and livelihoods:** Recognising agriculture as the backbone of local livelihoods, NEDC has distributed farm inputs, mechanised equipment and supported irrigation and value-chain interventions in selected locations. These moves are designed to boost

food security and restore incomes.

· Special projects and rapid impact: NEDC runs a "special projects" portfolio intended to yield high-visibility, quick wins — clinics, solar street lighting, market stalls and community centres — items that rebuild trust and catalyse economic activity in town centres.

A concrete example reported in 2024: the Commission awarded contracts for more than a hundred projects in Bauchi State alone, signaling the scale at which it can operate when funds are available and procurement timelines are met.

Humanitarian Complementarity: From Relief to Recovery

The humanitarian crisis in Nigeria's North-East is one of the largest and longest-running in Africa. Since the Boko Haram insurgency erupted in 2009, more than **2.2 million people** have been displaced internally, while several hundred thousand fled across borders into Chad, Niger, and Cameroon. Entire communities were uprooted, markets destroyed, farmlands abandoned, and social services collapsed under the strain of conflict and displacement.

When the North-East Development Commission (NEDC) came on board, the region was still in the throes of emergency relief. International humanitarian agencies such as the UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, and IOM were leading efforts to provide food, shelter, health care, and psychosocial support to millions living in camps or host communities. The NEDC was conceived as a bridge — an institution that would **connect humanitarian relief to long-term reconstruction** and development. Its philosophy was simple but critical: once the immediate crises of food and shelter are addressed, the next challenge is restoring livelihoods, rebuilding infrastructure, and enabling displaced families to return home safely and sustainably.

In practice, this means the Commission often works alongside humanitarian actors rather than replacing them. NEDC collaborates with UN agencies, INGOs, and local NGOs in designing programs that ensure a seamless transition from aid dependency to self-reliance. For example, while humanitarian agencies provide emergency shelters, NEDC steps in to construct **permanent housing units**, rehabilitate roads leading to resettled communities, and rebuild schools and health centers — ensuring that returnees can rebuild their lives with dignity.
A good illustration is the Commission's involvement in the **resettlement of internally displaced persons (IDPs)** in Borno and Adamawa States. Working with the Borno State Government and humanitarian partners, NEDC has built thousands of housing units in communities like Ngowom, Auno, and Bama. These projects are complemented by boreholes, solar street lights, and marketplaces to restore economic activity. The approach reflects an understanding that recovery must be holistic — combining shelter with access to water, livelihoods, education, and security.

Another critical area of humanitarian complementarity is livelihood restoration. Many displaced families lost their sources of income: farms, shops, and livestock during the conflict. To address this, NEDC has distributed agricultural inputs such as seedlings, fertilizers, and small-scale farm machinery to thousands of farmers returning to their communities. The Commission has also launched vocational and entrepreneurial training programmes for youth and women, providing starter packs in tailoring, carpentry, welding, and ICT.

These efforts are designed not only to reduce poverty but also to prevent renewed instability. The logic is straightforward: when communities have economic opportunities and a sense of ownership over their recovery, the allure of extremist recruitment diminishes.

The scars of the North-East conflict are not only physical but also psychological. Many survivors carry deep trauma from years of violence and displacement. NEDC has worked in collaboration with the **Federal Ministry of Health**, the **World Health Organization (WHO)**, and local NGOs to provide mobile clinics and mental health outreach programs in hard-to-reach areas.
In addition to these, the Commission's **medical outreach programmes** have provided free surgeries, maternal care, and eye treatments to thousands of beneficiaries. These initiatives not only restore health but also rebuild trust between government institutions and communities that have long felt neglected.

Education is another critical front in the relief-to-recovery transition. Displacement disrupted schooling for millions of children across Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa. Recognizing that education is both a right and a tool for long-term stability, NEDC has rehabilitated and furnished numerous schools, supplied instructional materials, and partnered with UNICEF and state governments to train teachers. Through its **Education Endowment Fund**, the Commission also sponsors scholarships for students from the North-East, supporting tertiary education and vocational training in disciplines relevant to rebuilding the region — such as engineering, ICT, and environmental management.

Since the Boko Haram insurgency erupted in 2009, more than 2.2 million people have been displaced internally, while several hundred thousand fled across borders into Chad, Niger, and Cameroon.

Bridging humanitarian and development work requires strong coordination. NEDC sits on multiple inter-agency platforms that include the **National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA)**, **State Emergency Management Agencies (SEMAs)**, and UN humanitarian clusters. This coordination helps avoid duplication and ensures that projects align with state recovery plans and the broader **North-East Stabilisation and Development Master Plan (NESDMP)**.

By aligning interventions with international frameworks like the **Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus**, NEDC contributes to a more coherent regional recovery strategy. The HDP Nexus, endorsed by the United Nations and the World Bank, emphasizes that humanitarian relief, development programming, and peacebuilding must work hand in hand to achieve lasting stability.

Perhaps the most complex challenge lies in balancing support between IDP camps and returning communities. While NEDC continues to assist those still in camps, its long-term focus is on resettlement and community rebuilding. This transition requires careful timing: return must be voluntary, safe, and sustainable. Premature closure of camps without adequate housing, water, and security can deepen vulnerability.

To mitigate such risks, the Commission's approach is gradual — ensuring that every return community has at least basic services before relocation. In some cases, NEDC has combined reconstruction with peacebuilding efforts, supporting dialogue between returnees and host communities to prevent land disputes or resource conflicts.

NEDC's humanitarian-development strategy is reinforced by its partnerships with multilateral organizations and donors. The **World Bank's Multi-Sectoral Crisis Recovery Project (MCRP)**, for instance, complements NEDC's work in rebuilding roads, schools, and public buildings in conflict-affected areas. Similarly, the **European Union**, **UNDP**, and **African Development Bank** have worked with NEDC in implementing projects focused on resilience, energy access, and institutional capacity building.

These collaborations not only bring technical expertise and funding but also enforce standards of transparency, sustainability, and impact measurement — essential ingredients for a credible recovery process.

Despite progress, the humanitarian-to-development transition remains fragile. Persistent insecurity in some areas hampers access for workers and contractors. Limited funding and bureaucratic bottlenecks delay project completion. Coordination between federal and state agencies, while improving, still faces overlaps and gaps. Yet, NEDC's integrated approach — combining relief, recovery, and resilience — remains the most promising framework for rebuilding the North-East.

As the Commission continues implementing its 10-year **Stabilisation and Development Master Plan**, the focus is shifting toward long-term resilience: strengthening local governance, empowering communities to manage their own recovery, and ensuring that reconstruction delivers not just buildings, but hope.

In the words of one NEDC field officer in Yobe State: "Every borehole we drill, every school we rebuild, every house we roof — these are not just projects; they are proof to our people that peace can bring a better life."

That philosophy captures the essence of humanitarian complementarity — the idea that relief and development are not opposites but stages of the same journey. And for the millions of Nigerians rebuilding their lives in the North-East, that journey is finally beginning to turn from survival to renewal.

Looking Ahead: Can NEDC Turn Momentum into Transformation?

The North-East's recovery will be measured in years and decades, not months. The wounds of conflict, displacement, and neglect run deep, and rebuilding lives requires more than rebuilding infrastructure. The North-East Development Commission's (NEDC) existence matters precisely because it institutionalises a long-term federal commitment to a region that might otherwise be forgotten once the urgency of crisis fades. By establishing a permanent development institution, the government has created a mechanism not just for rehabilitation, but for sustained regional transformation.

So far, the Commission's record is tangible: clinics have been rehabilitated, roads reopened, bridges rebuilt, and health outreach programmes—such as surgical camps—have reached underserved communities. It has also rolled out housing reconstruction schemes, youth empowerment programmes, and skills acquisition initiatives. Through partnerships with financiers, implementing agencies, and development partners, NEDC has begun to deliver projects at a scale previously unseen in the region. These achievements represent real momentum.

The scale of that requirement has pushed NEDC to combine federal allocations with multilateral financing and partnerships.

Yet, the deeper question remains: can this momentum be converted into transformation? The ultimate test will not be the number of contracts awarded or structures completed, but whether these interventions translate into measurable improvements in human well-being. Real success will mean more children graduating from quality schools, farmers producing surplus yields, women and youth finding sustainable livelihoods, and communities no longer dependent on emergency relief. It will mean a North-East that stands on its own feet—economically, socially, and institutionally.

To reach that point, NEDC must evolve from being primarily a project-implementing body into a catalyst for systems change. That will require tightening transparency and accountability mechanisms to sustain public trust, deepening collaboration with state governments to ensure ownership and continuity, and embedding monitoring and evaluation frameworks that focus on outcomes rather than outputs. The Commission must also strengthen its communication channels, ensuring citizens understand not just what is being built, but how it benefits them in the long term.

Equally crucial is fostering private sector participation. No development agency alone can generate the scale of investment needed to transform the North-East's economy. By crowding in private capital, encouraging innovation, and supporting enterprise development, NEDC can create a more self-sustaining growth model. Coupled with peacebuilding and social cohesion initiatives, these efforts could help ensure that economic progress is matched by stability and inclusion.

If NEDC maintains this course—anchored in transparency, collaboration, and long-term vision—it could become more than a reconstruction agency. It could be the institution that finally breaks the cycle of fragility in the North-East, converting years of loss into a legacy of renewal. The task is daunting, but so too is the promise: a resilient, self-reliant region that embodies Nigeria's capacity to heal and rebuild from within.

"Is NEDC Living Up to Its Promise?" Dr. Zanna Speaks

By Ayshatu S Rabo

Dr. Hassan Zanna Boguma, the *Zanna Boguma of Borno and Special Adviser to the Governor of Borno State on Local Government matters, is a seasoned media personality, art patron and governance expert. In this interview, he spoke with our reporter this interview, he offers a measured and insightful assessment of the North-East Development Commission (NEDC). Drawing from policy frameworks, on-ground realities, and institutional accountability principles, he examines the Commission's achievements, shortcomings, and future direction. His responses move beyond rhetoric, engaging critically with transparency, community participation, and sustainable development in one of Nigeria's most fragile regions.*

To what extent has the NEDC contributed to improving socio-economic development in the North-East region, particularly in education, health, and infrastructure?

Dr. Zanna:
The North-East Development Commission (NEDC) has recorded meaningful, though uneven, progress in rebuilding the region's socio-economic foundations. Its interventions across education, health, and infrastructure are visible and significant, even as challenges remain in depth, coordination, and sustainability.

In education, the Commission has reconstructed and equipped hundreds of classrooms, established an Education Endowment Fund supporting scholarships and teacher training, and distributed ICT and learning materials across the six North-East states.

Partnerships with universities and technical institutions have also enabled the rehabilitation of laboratories and hostels. However, the impact is constrained by teacher shortages, conflict-induced displacement, and delays in project completion.

In the health sector, the NEDC has restored access to essential services through the construction and upgrading of primary healthcare centres, maternity wards, and specialised facilities such as dental and eye clinics. The provision of ambulances, drugs, and medical outreach programmes for internally displaced persons (IDPs) has improved coverage, though demand continues to outpace available capacity.

Infrastructure remains the Commission's most visible footprint. Roads, bridges, boreholes, housing estates, and solar installations have reconnected communities and stimulated economic activity.

Notably, the 1,000 housing units in Ngowom, Borno State, present a strong model for IDP resettlement. Nonetheless, issues of incomplete projects, duplication, and long-term maintenance persist.

Overall, the NEDC has restored critical social services and economic linkages, laying an important foundation for recovery. To achieve deeper impact, it must strengthen community engagement, complete ongoing projects, and enhance monitoring and evaluation systems.

Some observers express concern about the pace of NEDC projects and the level of transparency around them. How do you balance these criticisms with your optimism about the Commission's potential and achievements?

Dr. Zanna:
Public perception of the NEDC reflects a blend of skepticism and cautious optimism—and both positions are valid.

Critics rightly point to slow project execution, abandoned

sites, and limited transparency in procurement and reporting. Allegations of inflated contracts, overlapping interventions, and restricted access to information by civil society raise legitimate accountability concerns that, if unaddressed, could erode public trust.

Yet optimism remains justified. The NEDC operates under a 10-year North-East Stabilisation and Development Master Plan (NESDMP), a rare example of structured, long-term planning in regional reconstruction.

Despite institutional challenges, the Commission has completed hundreds of projects and supported thousands through education, health, housing, and ICT programmes. Its collaboration with the military, humanitarian actors, and state governments has also helped stabilise post-conflict communities.

Criticism and optimism should not be viewed as opposing forces but as complementary drivers of reform. Constructive scrutiny strengthens accountability, while optimism acknowledges progress and potential. The way forward lies in institutionalising transparency through open procurement systems, quarterly public reporting, and independent audits. When openness becomes standard practice, public confidence will follow.

In essence, the NEDC can deliver, but it must now demonstrate that its speed, standards, and sincerity truly match its mandate.

Looking ahead, what should the NEDC focus on to maximise its developmental impact and meet the expectations of the people in the North-East region?

Dr. Zanna::
To maximise impact, the NEDC must transition from an emergency reconstruction agency into a strategic development institution defined by focus, accountability, and people-centred priorities. Six critical directions stand out:

1. Complete and Consolidate: Prioritise the completion of existing projects rather than overextending resources across new ones. Quality must take precedence over quantity.

2. Transparency and Open Data: Establish an Open NEDC Portal that provides real-time information on projects, budgets, contractors, timelines, and outcomes. Transparency is essential to credibility.

3. Human Capital Development: Expand investment in education, ICT skills, and healthcare personnel to sustain physical infrastructure.

4. Integrated Regional Infrastructure: Develop cross-state road networks, solar grids, irrigation systems, and agro-processing corridors that enhance trade and reduce isolation.

5. Community and Local Government Empowerment: Allocate funds for community-driven microprojects with local labour participation and shared supervision.

6. Economic Diversification: Strengthen agriculture, renewable energy, and small enterprises to reduce dependency on federal allocations and humanitarian aid.

If pursued with discipline and continuity, these priorities can transform the North-East from a zone of recovery into one of renewal and opportunity.

How might local communities, traditional leaders, and civil society organisations better partner with the NEDC to ensure inclusive, sustainable, and responsive development?

Dr. Zanna:
Sustainable development in the North-East must be community-driven, culturally grounded, and institutionally transparent. For the NEDC to succeed, it must deepen collaboration with local actors who command trust and possess contextual knowledge.

Local Communities should be involved in project design, implementation, and monitoring. Establishing Community Development Monitoring Committees (CDMCs) in project areas would enable beneficiaries to track progress and verify delivery. Prioritising local labour and materials would also promote employment and ownership.

Traditional and Religious Leaders, as custodians of social cohesion, can act as development mediators—resolving land disputes, mobilising community support, and ensuring cultural sensitivity. Institutionalising their role through a Council of Traditional and Religious Leaders for Development, meeting quarterly, would strengthen oversight and legitimacy.

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) should function as independent monitors, producing citizen scorecards and advocating for the inclusion of women, youth, and vulnerable groups. Their roles in public awareness, feedback collection, and policy research are essential to responsive governance.

To formalise these partnerships, the NEDC should establish a Stakeholder Engagement Department, sign MoUs with CSO networks and traditional councils, and convene annual Regional Development Forums for joint planning and review.

Such inclusivity shifts development from a top-down intervention to shared ownership, ensuring projects reflect resilience, accountability, and collective purpose.

From Recovery to Renewal: Inside NEDC's Eight-Year Journey in Northeast Nigeria

By Jerry Adesewo

When the North-East Development Commission (NEDC) was established in 2016, there was no roadmap given to heal fractured communities, rebuild shattered towns, or rekindle hope in a region battered by insurgency and neglect.

What it did inherit, however, was a terrain of resilience—people determined to survive, if not yet thrive. Eight years on, the story of NEDC's journey is not found simply in budgets or projects, but in the faces of men, women, and children whose everyday lives have been quietly transformed.

In Maiduguri, once the epicentre of Boko Haram's destruction, markets now hum again. The young men who once paced empty streets in search of work are now apprentices learning trades funded through skills acquisition programmes. Women who spent nights fearing for their children's futures now gather in cooperatives stitching uniforms, baking bread, and supporting each other toward financial independence. These are not abstract statistics; these are human lives being rewritten.

From Rubble to Routine
At the heart of NEDC's eight years is its dual mission: reconstruction and restoration. In communities where schools were reduced to hollow shells, classrooms now echo with voices learning arithmetic and science. Where health centres once stood broken, patients queue for vaccinations and antenatal care. For mothers like Amina—a farmer displaced with her family in 2014—NEDC's work means more than new wells or classroom blocks. It means water safe enough to drink and schools close enough for her children to walk to, without fear. "Nobody can take back the pain of the years gone," Amina says, "but we can build again. I see life returning to our land."

Bridging Policy and People
The Commission's achievements haven't been seamless. In the early years, logistical challenges, insecurity, and bureaucratic bottlenecks slowed momentum.

But beneath the policy papers and whiteboards in Abuja, NEDC staff learned a vital lesson: development cannot be designed for people alone; it must be with them. Community consultations became routine. Local leaders were empowered to monitor projects. And slowly, trust—so essential and fragile—began to return.

It's this human engagement that distinguishes NEDC's work. Roads, schools, and clinics are important, but the real progress is in the restored dignity of a people who thought their region would be forgotten forever.

Voices of Change
Take the story of 23-year-old Musa, a youth trained in solar technology through a Commission-backed programme. "I used to sit at home with nothing to do," he says. "Now I install and repair solar panels. I earn. I help my family. I even save a little." Musa's

small workshop now lights homes in his neighbourhood—literal illumination born from one young man's opportunity.

Or Fatima, a teacher in Damaturu, who watched her school fall to violence, only to see it rise again through NEDC funding. "Children are back in class," she says. "That is hope."

Looking Ahead: What's Next?
Eight years of effort have laid solid foundations, but the journey is far from over. The region still grapples with unemployment, climate pressures, and the lingering social wounds of conflict. Critics rightly ask: can NEDC sustain these gains? Can it pivot from reconstruction to long-term economic growth? Those are fair questions—but they must be asked alongside another: Will Nigeria invest in the Northeast's future with the same resolve that it invests in its capitals?

NEDC's answer to that challenge is found not in rhetoric, but in programme evolution—shifting from "relief and repair" to "growth and opportunity." Agriculture value chains are being strengthened; microcredit schemes are now coupled with business incubators; and partnerships with private sector actors aim to create jobs that last.

The Human Measure of Progress
If development is truly measured in human terms, then NEDC's eight-year stride is already remarkable. Not because every problem has been solved, but because people are no longer defined by displacement or loss, but by work, community, and possibility.

Eight years is a chapter, not a conclusion. But for mothers drawing water from a new borehole, for students in classrooms that once crumbled, and for young people like Musa lighting homes and futures alike, NEDC's work has become a part of their everyday story—not as an external rescue, but as a partner in rebuilding life.

And perhaps, that is the most lasting measure of all.

YOUTH EMANCIPATION AND ENTREPRENEURRSHIP: A KEY TO UNLOCKING NIGERIA'S DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIEND.

By Comrade Philip UO. Ikodor

Youth emancipation and engagement in Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) are fundamental to Nigeria's economic growth and a central pillar of the current administration's strategy. By empowering the youth to become entrepreneurs, the government is not only tackling high unemployment rates but also creating a more diverse, resilient, and inclusive economy. This shift, combined with recent tax reforms, aims to boost the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and generate greater revenue, ultimately renewing hope for the nation's young population.

The Imperative of Youth-Led SMEs
Nigeria has a median age of 18.4 years, with a significant majority of its population under 30. This demographic dividend, if harnessed correctly, can be a powerful engine for economic development. However, a lack of opportunities has historically led to a high unemployment rate among this group, fostering social instability and discouraging innovation.

SMEs are the logical vehicle for unlocking this potential. They are a major source of employment, accounting for over 50% of jobs in many developing economies. Unlike large, slow-moving corporations, SMEs are flexible and can adapt quickly to market demands. Youth-led SMEs, in particular, are often at the forefront of technological innovation, driving growth in sectors such as e-commerce, fintech, and the creative industries.

By becoming job creators rather than job seekers, young Nigerians can contribute directly to poverty reduction and an increase in national income.

Government Initiatives and the Renewed Hope Agenda
The current administration has prioritized youth engagement through various initiatives designed to create an enabling environment for young entrepreneurs. Key programs include:

- F**inancial Access:** Schemes like the **Nigeria Youth Investment Fund (NYIF)** and grants from various agencies provide much-needed seed capital and low-interest loans. This addresses the significant challenge of access to finance, which has long been a barrier for aspiring young entrepreneurs.
- **Skills Development:** Programs like the **Three Million Technical Talent (3MTT)** Initiative are crucial. They equip youths with essential digital and technical skills, preparing them for the demands of the modern, knowledge-based economy. This enhances their employability and empowers them to build tech-focused startups.
- **Policy Support:** The **Ministry of Youth Development** serves as a centralized body to coordinate these efforts, ensuring that youth-centric policies are integrated across different sectors of the economy. This holistic approach signals a strong commitment to youth empowerment.

These initiatives collectively aim to reduce the **"Japa" syndrome** and channel the energy and talent of Nigeria's youth into productive ventures at home.

The Impact of Tax Reform on GDP and IGR
The recently passed tax reform is a game-changer for youth-led SMEs and a cornerstone of the economic revitalization plan. Its primary goal is to **streamline the tax** system, reduce the burden on small businesses, and ultimately boost the country's revenue generation.

- **Tax Relief and Incentives:** The reform grants significant **tax exemptions** to micro and small businesses, often based on their annual turnover. This policy is a huge relief for new and emerging businesses, allowing them to reinvest their profits into growth rather than paying a heavy tax liability. It encourages informal businesses to formalize, expanding the tax base and creating a more transparent and structured business environment.
- **Boosting Revenue (IGR):** While tax rates may be lower for small businesses, the expansion of the tax base due to increased formalization leads to a higher overall Internal Generated Revenue (IGR). A simplified, more equitable tax system encourages compliance. This reliable stream of revenue can be used to fund critical infrastructure and services, creating a positive feedback loop that supports business growth and job creation.
- **Enhancing GDP:** As more youth-led SMEs thrive, they contribute directly to the national GDP. Their innovations, job creation, and overall economic activity propel the country's economic output. The tax reforms provide the financial space for these businesses to scale up, multiply, and collectively make a substantial contribution to the nation's economic prosperity.

Conclusion: Hope for the Future
By fostering an ecosystem where youth-led SMEs can flourish, the current administration is not just addressing unemployment; it's building a foundation for sustainable, long-term economic growth. The combination of targeted youth empowerment initiatives and a strategic tax reform creates an environment of inclusivity and opportunity. This renewed commitment to a youth-driven economy provides tangible hope, empowering a generation to build a more prosperous and self-reliant Nigeria.

GENERAL C.G MUSA, OFR:

A New Shield for a Nation in Crisis

When President Bola Ahmed Tinubu swore in retired General Christopher Gwabin Musa as Nigeria's Minister of Defence on 4 December 2025, the nation felt a collective surge of hope. For the first time under this administration, a former Chief of Defence Staff – a man who has commanded troops on the frontlines of the Boko Haram insurgency and the bandit-ridden corridors of the North-West – sits at the cabinet table. His appointment, hailed across the religious and ethnic spectrum, is being billed as "the greatest thing to happen to the Tinubu government."

Born a Christian in the southern part of Kaduna State, General Musa carries a reputation for disciplined leadership and a deep-rooted commitment to the unity of Nigeria. His track record as CDS (June 2023 – October 2025) was marked by a relentless drive to modernise the armed forces, improve intelligence sharing, and bring a sharper focus to the fight against bandits, terrorists and kidnappers. Nigerians, weary of endless curfews and school abductions, have welcomed his elevation with a mixture of optimism and cautious expectation.

A Vision Anchored in Technology and Partnership General Musa has already outlined a bold, three-pillar reform agenda that seeks to transform the nation's security architecture:

1. Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) for ISR and Offensive Operations
- The Defence Ministry will fast-track the acquisition and deployment of medium-altitude, long-endurance drones capable of real-time surveillance across the Sahel and the Niger Delta.
- These platforms will not only provide eyes in the sky for early warning but also enable precision strikes against identified terrorist camps and bandit hideouts, reducing collateral damage.
- A dedicated UAV command centre in Abuja will coordinate missions, integrate data from the Nigerian Air Force and the National Intelligence Agency, and ensure rapid decision-making.

2. Regulation and Integration of Private Security Companies (PSCs)
- Drawing on the South African model, where PSCs operate under strict licensing, oversight, and mandatory partnership with state forces, Nigeria will introduce a "National Private Security Framework."
- PSCs will be required to share intelligence, adhere to human-rights standards, and be vetted for past abuses. In return, they will receive government contracts to guard critical infrastructure, escort convoys, and support community policing initiatives.
- The aim is to turn a fragmented private security market into a disciplined extension of the state, freeing up regular troops for higher-intensity operations.

3. Comprehensive Security Sector Reform (SSR)
- A transparent, merit-based appointment process will be instituted for senior command positions, ensuring that leadership reflects the nation's diversity and is insulated from political patronage.
- An independent oversight board, with representation from civil society, the legislature, and the armed forces, will audit procurement, monitor human-rights compliance, and publish quarterly reports.
- Training curricula will be revised to emphasise civilian-military relations, ethics, and the protection of civilians, aligning Nigeria's security institutions with democratic governance principles.

These reforms, if implemented with the same urgency that characterised the President's inauguration, could mark a turning point in Nigeria's battle against insecurity.

Why the Nation Is Watching
The appointment of a retired general to the defence portfolio is unprecedented in Tinubu's cabinet, and it has sparked a broader conversation about the role of former military officers in governance. Analysts point to former Army Chief TY Buratai and Major-General Lawrence Onoja as potential assets for a wider security reshuffle, suggesting that a "military-civilian hybrid" could provide the strategic coherence the country desperately needs.

Yet, as Nigerians know all too well, good intentions must be matched by execution. The memory of past promises – from "quick wins" to "turning the tide" – lingers. The success of General Musa's agenda will be measured not in press releases, but in safer schools, unblocked highways, and communities that no longer live under the shadow of banditry.

A Call to the Nation General Christopher Gwabin Musa steps into a role that is as daunting as it is vital. His vision of UAV-enabled intelligence, a regulated private-security sector, and a transparent security apparatus offers a roadmap out of the darkness that has plagued our streets for far too long.

OurNigeria News will continue to follow his progress, to hold the Defence Ministry accountable, and to amplify the voices of those on the frontlines – the soldiers, the PSC operatives, and the civilians who yearn for peace.

What we expect to see in his first 100 days
General Christopher Musa's first 100 days should be laser-focused on three urgent goals: wiping out the most wanted bandit and Boko Haram commanders, ending the spate of school-kidnappings, and turning Nigeria's highways into safe corridors for commuters. He has already signaled that "going after kidnappers, bandits, criminals and ensuring Nigerians can be safe in schools, farms and their homes" is a core part of his mandate, and his recent interview stressed a "comprehensive approach" that includes rapid, intelligence-driven strikes against the leadership of these groups [2]. By coupling that resolve with the UAV-enabled ISR and offensive capabilities he's championing, as well as tighter regulation of private security firms to complement state forces, he can hit the top echelons of the criminal networks while protecting the most vulnerable.

- Eliminate top bandit and Boko Haram leaders – use real-time drone surveillance to locate and neutralize key figures before they regroup.
- Stop student abductions – deploy the Safe Schools Initiative, backed by community-based intelligence, to secure campuses and rescue victims quickly.
- Secure highways – integrate UAV patrols, beef up road-side checkpoints, and work with regulated private security outfits to deter bandit ambushes.

Vibrant Youth, Shared Voices: Art as a Bridge of Development and Cultural Exchange

By Jerry Adesewo

The Bangladesh High Commission's exhibition Vibrant Youth, organized in collaboration with BEA Studio, could not have arrived at a more urgent moment—when societies everywhere are re-examining how best to prepare their young people not just for survival, but for meaningful participation in a world defined by rapid social shifts, digital acceleration, migration, identity questions, and the restructuring of global economies. Art, in this context, becomes more than a creative practice; it becomes a tool of formation, empowerment, diplomacy, and cultural literacy.

In his welcome message, the High Commissioner describes the Youth Festival in Bangladesh as embodying "creativity, innovation, and a strong commitment to national advancement," noting that Vibrant Youth is designed to enhance "people-to-people contacts, and promote bilateral relations and more cultural exchanges between Bangladesh and Nigeria."

That aspiration transforms the exhibition from a gallery event into a diplomatic exercise in soft power and youth development.

Art as a Training Ground for Thinking Citizens
The curatorial statement by Bamaiyi Emmanuel, CEO of BEA Studio, builds on this, describing the participating artists as a "powerful artistic frequency" shaping tomorrow.

This phrasing is significant. It suggests that young artists are not only documenting their time but also generating the emotional and cultural intelligence that will define future societies.
Director General of the National Council for Arts and Culture, Mr. Obi Asika, could not hide his excitement at the brilliance of the young minds behind the initiative, particularly Emmanuel Baimaiyi whom he commended his commitment to channeling his youth to such initiative.

"This is a bright start, and I would look forward to see a follow-up edition that includes young artists from Bangladesh, and of course, with Emmanuel as curator," he said adding that the NCAC is open to working with the Embassy to strengthen the bilateral relationship between both countries, from a cultural exchange point of view.

Across the works of the eight featured Nigerian artists, one sees a consistent thread: art as a lens for internal reflection and social responsibility.

Bamaiyi Emmanuel merges expressive portraiture with social symbolism, turning art into "advocacy to humanity," using mixed media, including paper textures, to translate memory into visual language.

Hauwa Sufyan uses "bold colours, symbolic elements, and emotionally charged compositions" to narrate identity and everyday African stories.

Dada Nifemi Emmanuel's practice blends environmental memory and community life, reflecting a concern with real-world sustainability.

What is apparent here is that the youth featured are not making art for self-display; they are using art to think publicly, to teach, to negotiate social anxieties, and to critique systems.

Cultural Exchange as Mutual Enrichment

The High Commissioner insists that the event "will help cultivate bonds of friendship between the youths of Bangladesh and Nigeria," positioning art as a diplomatic corridor.

In an age where diplomatic language often revolves around trade and technology, this is a refreshing reminder that cultural exchange remains one of the most durable forms of international partnership.
Bangladesh and Nigeria share similar demographic realities: young populations carrying the emotional weight of rapid modernization. What Vibrant Youth does is reveal that beneath geopolitical maps and national boundaries, young creative minds are already speaking to each other—through colour, form, symbolism, and shared aspirations.

The participating artists embody this capacity: Ameh Odachi meditates on healing, vulnerability, and memory using beads, sand, and textured acrylics. Buhari Sani Junaid blends text, painting, and fabric to celebrate people and culture, connecting art with empowerment through his foundation for youth upcycling. Victor Elera interrogates cultural heritage and social justice with mixed-media detail. Udie Undie turns brushstrokes into exercises in cognitive mapping and mental health dialogue, while Favour Musa channels resilience, hope, and transformation, reminding us that even "in difficult situations, hope and beauty still exist."

Their works suggest that youth development is not only a function of technical training but also of emotional literacy, psychological agency, and cultural confidence.

Art as Future Infrastructure
The recurring subtext of Vibrant Youth is that a society seeking to invest in its young people must also invest in their capacity to feel, interpret, critique, and create. This is infrastructure—not of roads and bridges, but of voice, empathy, and cultural self-awareness.

Art teaches complex thinking (symbolism, narrative, abstraction), communication beyond language (colour, posture, visual metaphor), global citizenship (understanding other cultures beyond stereotypes), healing and wellness (as explored by Musa, Odachi, Undie) and innovation in material use (as seen in the textured, mixed-media practices)
These skills are foundational to peace-building, diplomacy, identity stability, and community resilience.

Toward a Constructive Youth Agenda
A truly modern youth development policy cannot ignore the arts. Through events like Vibrant Youth, young Nigerians and Bangladeshis are positioned not just as observers of culture but as co-authors of a shared global imagination.

Art becomes a tool of identity affirmation, a medium of conflict resolution, a mirror for introspection, a bridge for international relationships, a language of youth empowerment and leadership.

When the High Commissioner calls for "more cultural exchanges between Bangladesh and Nigeria," the implication is clear: nations that exchange art exchange humanity, empathy, and worldview.

Conclusion
Vibrant Youth is more than a showcase of talent. It is a living syllabus for how young creatives will shape the future—thoughtfully, collaboratively, and visually. In their colours and textures, these artists highlight a common pulse: youth everywhere are searching, building, and imagining. And when nations create room for them to do so together, cultural diplomacy becomes not performance, but shared growth.

Art, then, is not an extracurricular pastime but vital scaffolding for the next generation's emotional, social, and civic intelligence—an instrument that teaches young people not only to see the world but to remake it with conviction and creativity.

In all, Emmanuel Baimaiyi deserves huge commendation for birthing this initiative.

Bow and Go Republic:

Where Ambassadors Are Cleared by Courtesy

By Jerry Adesewo

If democracy were a discipline, ambassadorial screening would be its oral examination—probing, inconvenient, and necessary. In Nigeria, however, it has been domesticated into a gentler ritual known as bow and go: arrive, smile, bow, exit—qualified by posture, not proof. It is efficient, elegant, and almost entirely empty.

The Senate chamber has perfected this choreography. Screening is no longer about questions but recognition; not competence, but comfort. Nominees are waved through on familiarity, political lineage, or the collective impatience to adjourn. Accountability, once the point of the exercise, now feels like an interruption—an awkward pause in an otherwise smooth performance.

Welcome to the Bow and Go Republic—where procedure survives, but purpose has quietly excused itself.

In theory, ambassadorial screening exists to test temperament, loyalty to the state, knowledge of foreign policy, and the capacity for restraint. Ambassadors are not influencers; they are custodians of tone. They do not argue; they negotiate. They do not posture; they listen. In practice, however, the Nigerian version treats these ideals as optional extras. The process has been reduced to a courtesy call that confers legitimacy by mere presence.

The clearance of Reno Omokri illustrates the problem in sharp relief. Long defined by combative rhetoric, digital vituperation, and open hostility toward the now President, and state institutions, he emerged from the Senate newly certified as diplomatic material. There were no searching questions about temperament. No inquiry into the discipline required of an envoy. No reflection on whether a public record of provocation aligns with the demands of international representation.

This is not an argument against dissent. Democracies thrive on disagreement. But diplomacy thrives on restraint. The transition from partisan combat to international representation is not impossible—but it requires interrogation, reflection, and reassurance. Instead, Omokri received the same ceremonial nod as everyone else. Bow. Go. Represent.

The problem here is not the individual nominee; it is the institutional amnesia that accompanies nomination. In a polity where tweets outlive tenures and screenshots serve as historical records, the Senate briefly forgot how memory works. Yesterday's firebrand is today's diplomat—not through demonstrated evolution, but through procedural courtesy.

Then there is the Senate's most elegant fast-track: former First Ladies. In the unwritten manual of Nigerian governance, marital proximity to power doubles as credential. These nominees do not merely bow and go—they glide. Smiles replace scrutiny. Reverence substitutes for review. To ask questions would appear impolite, almost un-African. After all, how does one interrogate someone who once waved from bulletproof convoys?

But ribbon-cutting, goodwill messages, and pet projects are not apprenticeships in foreign policy. Hosting luncheons does not translate automatically into navigating bilateral tensions or multilateral negotiations. To assume otherwise is to confuse symbolism with substance. Worse still, it cheapens gender equity by presenting exemption as empowerment. Many Nigerian women have earned diplomatic roles through expertise and experience; fast-tracking by association does them no favours.

When screening becomes endorsement and oversight becomes hospitality, citizens receive a clear message

There is no doubting however that these are brilliant and successful women, but why deny Nigerians the opportunity to see them defend their nominations. This new calling is completely different from whatever they have done before now.

The Bow and Go Republic also thrives on selective seriousness. The same Senate that can grill private citizens, junior appointees, and civil servants with forensic zeal suddenly discovers its gallantry when faced with politically connected nominees. Questions become discourteous. Scrutiny becomes suspicion. Oversight is recast as hostility. And so the chamber opts for harmony over honesty.

The consequences are not abstract. Nigeria's image abroad is a delicate instrument. Ambassadors shape narratives, manage crises, and represent national interests in rooms where tone matters as much as content. When envoys are appointed without rigorous vetting, the nation risks exporting confusion, controversy, or indiscipline—wrapped neatly in diplomatic immunity.

There is also a deeper democratic cost. Rituals matter in governance because they signal values. When screening becomes endorsement and oversight becomes hospitality, citizens receive a clear message: proximity beats preparation; loyalty outranks literacy; courtesy trumps competence. Over time, this message corrodes trust, breeding cynicism where confidence should exist.

Perhaps the solution is honesty. Let us rename the exercise Ambassadorial Blessing Ceremony. It would spare the public the pretense. The bows would remain. The smiles would endure. The gavel would fall. And democracy, having served its purpose as decoration, would be escorted quietly out of the room.

Better still, the Senate could reclaim the seriousness of its mandate. Screening need not be hostile to be hard. Questions can be firm without being rude. Scrutiny can coexist with dignity. A democracy confident in itself does not fear questions; it invites them.

Until that day, the Bow and Go Republic marches on—efficient, elegant, and empty. Ambassadors will continue to be cleared by courtesy, and the nation will continue to wonder when performance replaced purpose, and why the shortest ritual in our democracy carries the longest consequences.

IF OUR VOTES TRULY COUNTED, POLITICIANS WOULDN'T BE JUMPING SHIP.

By Matthew Eloyi

As Nigeria inches closer to the 2027 general elections, the political atmosphere has once again begun to heat up; not with policy debates or issue-based campaigns, but with the all-too-familiar spectacle of political defections. Governors, lawmakers, and political heavyweights are trooping en masse into the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), seeking refuge under the umbrella of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's influence.

The trend is neither new nor surprising. In Nigeria's political space, loyalty to ideology or party philosophy has always been secondary to loyalty to power. What is alarming, however, is how brazenly politicians now switch sides without even attempting to disguise their intentions. It is all about survival — and not survival of ideals or the people's will, but survival of personal ambition. One cannot help but wonder: if our votes truly counted, would there be such desperation to align with the ruling party?

The mass defections ahead of every election cycle are a stark reminder of how fragile our democracy remains. Politicians cross from one party to another not because they have discovered new convictions or seen a superior manifesto, but because they believe, rightly or wrongly, that elections in Nigeria are not determined by the ballot, but by the backing of those in power. The fear of losing out in the "federal might" game drives them to abandon the parties that brought them into office in the first place.

This is an insult to the intelligence of the Nigerian voter. It implies that the people's votes are merely ceremonial, that real political power lies not in the electorate but in the corridors of Aso Rock. The continuous exodus of politicians to the ruling party underscores a deep distrust in our electoral institutions and processes. It tells us that, for many in power, election outcomes are pre-determined, and that the easiest route to political security is through proximity to the presidency.

True democracy thrives on diversity of ideas, competition of visions, and the sanctity of the ballot. In countries where votes genuinely count, political parties grow through public trust, not through the recruitment of defectors. Leaders rise or fall based on performance, not patronage. But in Nigeria, political relevance often depends on whose table one dines at, not how well one serves the people.

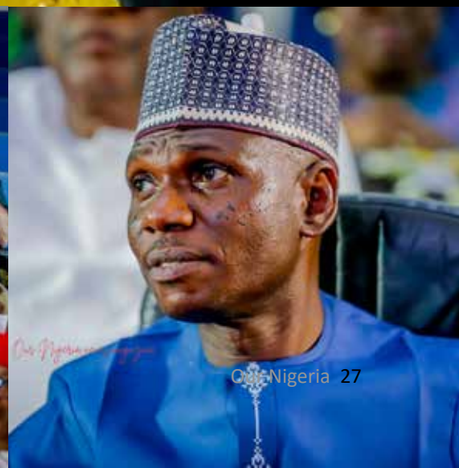
The tragedy of this defectors' culture is that it leaves no room for accountability. When a politician wins an election under one party and crosses to another for convenience, it betrays the trust of those who voted based on that initial platform. It weakens opposition parties, stifles democratic growth, and turns governance into a game of musical chairs.

If citizens' votes were sacred, every politician would think twice before decamping. They would know that their fate rests not with the powers that be, but with the people who put them there. They would focus more on delivering good governance, strengthening institutions, and earning the public's trust rather than currying favour from the ruling elite.

Until Nigeria reforms its political culture and truly empowers the voter, defections will remain the order of the day. Politicians will continue to chase power instead of principles, and elections will continue to be a contest of influence rather than ideas.

The day our votes start to truly count, the floodgates of defections will close; because then, every politician will realise that the only political capital worth pursuing is the people's mandate.

Public presentation of Dr. A.K Peter's 'Canon of Leadership' and 'The Quintessential Leader'



Farewell Dinner for Gen CG Musa after his pulling out from the military

Dame (Dr.) Adaora Umeoji, Managing Director/CEO, Zenith Bank Plc

Alhaji Hussaini Kashim, SA to the HMOD

H.E. Hon. Idris Muhammad Gobir (Danchadi), the Deputy Governor of Sokoto State

H.E Caleb Muftwang, the Executive Governor of Plateau State

Air-Vice Marshal Ishiaka Oladayo Amao Rtd, former Chief of Air Staff.

The Teachers in the Digital Age

Introduction

The digital age has ushered in a profound transformation across every sphere of human existence, and education has not been spared. Once upon a time, teachers were regarded as the sole custodians of knowledge, the gatekeepers of wisdom, and the primary transmitters of information. Pupils relied almost exclusively on their teachers for instruction, guidance, and intellectual nourishment. Today, however, we inhabit a world where information is abundant, accessible at the click of a button, and technology permeates every classroom, lecture hall, and learning environment. This seismic shift demands a rethinking of traditional teaching roles, methodologies, and expectations.

In this piece, I seek to explore deeply the evolving responsibilities, challenges, and opportunities for teachers in the digital era. The task before educators is not merely to survive in this new landscape but to thrive, to harness the tools of technology while safeguarding the human essence of education.

The Evolving Role of Teachers

Historically, teachers were primarily transmitters of knowledge. Their role was to deliver content, explain concepts, and ensure that learners absorbed information in a structured manner. The classroom was a space of authority, where the teacher's voice dominated and the learner's role was largely receptive.

In the digital age, however, this paradigm has shifted dramatically. Teachers are no longer simply conveyors of facts; they are facilitators, mentors, and guides within a learning ecosystem enriched by digital tools. The integration of technology has redefined pedagogy, enabling personalised learning experiences and fostering collaboration that transcends geographical boundaries. Teachers now curate content rather than merely deliver it, helping learners navigate the vast ocean of information available online and teaching them

Professor Ojo Emmanuel Ademola

to discern credible sources from unreliable ones. They provide moral, emotional, and intellectual guidance, helping students develop critical thinking, resilience, and ethical awareness in a digital world often fraught with misinformation.

Furthermore, teachers have become innovators in pedagogy. With learning management systems, digital whiteboards, and interactive platforms, they design lessons that are engaging, adaptive, and responsive to individual needs. Data analytics now play a crucial role in education, allowing teachers to track student progress in real time, identify areas of weakness, and tailor interventions accordingly. This evolution underscores the necessity of continuous professional development and adaptability. Teachers must remain lifelong learners themselves, constantly updating their skills to keep pace with technological advancements.

Challenges in the Digital Age

While the digital revolution offers immense promise, it also presents formidable challenges. Teachers must contend with a range of obstacles that complicate their professional responsibilities.

One of the most pressing issues is the digital divide. Not all learners have equal access to devices, reliable internet connectivity, or supportive home environments. This disparity creates inequities in educational outcomes, leaving some students behind despite the best efforts of their teachers.

Another challenge lies in technological overload. The rapid pace of technological change can overwhelm educators. New platforms, applications, and tools emerge constantly, demanding time and energy to master. Without adequate training, teachers may experience resistance, frustration, or burnout.

Cybersecurity concerns also loom large. With increased reliance on digital platforms comes the risk of data breaches, cyberbullying, and exposure to harmful online content. Teachers must be vigilant in safeguarding both their own digital identities and those of their students.

Screen fatigue is another complication. Extended hours of online teaching and learning can lead to exhaustion, diminished concentration, and health concerns. Teachers must balance digital engagement with offline activities to preserve well-being.

Finally, there is the erosion of traditional classroom dynamics. The warmth of face-to-face interaction, the subtle cues of body language, and the communal spirit of a physical classroom are difficult to replicate online. Teachers must navigate the delicate balance between leveraging technology and preserving human connection, which remains central to effective education.

These challenges highlight the complexity of teaching in the digital age. It is not enough to adopt technology; teachers must also critically evaluate its impact, ensuring that it enhances rather than diminishes the quality of education.

Opportunities and Innovations

Despite the challenges, the digital age offers unprecedented opportunities for teachers who are willing to embrace innovation. Virtual classrooms, powered by platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Google Classroom, enable teachers to reach learners across continents, breaking down geographical barriers and fostering global collaboration. Interactive simulations allow students to engage with complex concepts through experiments and gamified learning experiences. For example, science students can conduct virtual laboratory experiments, while history students can explore interactive timelines that bring the past vividly to life.

Artificial intelligence has also emerged as a powerful ally. AI-driven tutoring systems provide personalised instruction, adapting to the pace and style of each learner. Teachers can use these systems to supplement their teaching, ensuring that no student is left behind.

Professional learning communities thrive online, enabling teachers to share best practices, collaborate on lesson plans, and engage in peer-to-peer mentoring. This global exchange of ideas enriches teaching methodologies and fosters professional growth.

Technology also facilitates inclusive education. Speech-to-text software, screen readers, and adaptive learning platforms ensure that students with disabilities can participate fully in the learning process. Teachers who harness these innovations can transform education into a dynamic, student-centred process. They prepare learners not only for academic success but also for the complexities of modern life, equipping them with digital literacy, critical thinking, and collaborative skills.

The Human Dimension

Technology, however sophisticated, will never replace the human dimension of teaching. Education is not a mechanical transfer of information; it is the shaping of character, the nurturing of values, and the inspiring of purpose. Teachers embody these qualities in ways no algorithm or machine can replicate. They are the moral compass, the creative spark, and the empathetic presence that transform learning from mere knowledge acquisition into a journey of growth and transformation.

The digital age must be recognised not as a threat to teachers but as a force that magnifies their influence. When teachers combine technological tools with human empathy, creativity, and wisdom, they create learning experiences that are both innovative and profoundly meaningful.

Technology can deliver efficiency, accessibility, and personalised pathways, but it cannot instil integrity, compassion, or resilience. Only teachers can breathe life into education, ensuring that learners are not passive consumers of content but active participants in a process that shapes their minds and souls.

The challenge is clear: teachers must not surrender their vocation to machines. Instead, they must assert their irreplaceable role, using technology as a servant rather than a master. The solution lies in balance—embracing digital innovation while safeguarding the relational essence of education. In this assertive fusion, teachers stand as the decisive force, ensuring that education in the digital age remains a transformative power, preparing learners to navigate complexity with wisdom, courage, and humanity.

Conclusion

The role of teachers in the digital age is both challenging and exhilarating. As custodians of learning, they must adapt to technological advancements while safeguarding the human essence of education. Success in this era hinges on resilience, creativity, and a commitment to lifelong learning.

By embracing digital tools and fostering meaningful connections, teachers can not only survive but thrive in shaping the future of education. The digital age does not diminish the importance of teachers; rather, it amplifies their influence in ways previously unimaginable.

Teachers remain the heart of education. Their ability to inspire, mentor, and guide is irreplaceable. In the digital age, their task is to blend tradition with innovation, ensuring that education remains a transformative force for individuals and societies alike.

Professor Ojo Emmanuel Ademola Africa's First Professor of Cybersecurity and Information Technology Management, Chartered Manager, UK Digital Journalist, Strategic Advisor & Prophetic Mobiliser for National Transformation, and General Evangelist of CAC Nigeria and Overseas

MAJOR GENERAL LAWRENCE ONOJA (RTD):

A Soldier-Scholar Who Built, Bridged and Bettered Nigeria

By Matthew Eloyi

Few public figures in contemporary Nigeria combine the discipline of a career soldier, the curiosity of a scholar and the civic energy of an engaged elder statesman quite like Major General Lawrence Anebi Onoja (rtd). As a military governor, senior army officer, academic and community leader, Onoja's five-decade public life offers a catalogue of achievements that still matter — in security institutions, in the classrooms that now host his lectures, in the alumni groups he strengthened, and in the quiet ways he has worked to heal fault lines across communities. This is not an attempt at hagiography so much as a clear-eyed celebration of a career that, whether you measure it by reforms delivered, lives mentored or ideas advanced, leaves a legacy worthy of careful attention.

Born on 10th August 1948 at Idekpa Okpiko in Ohimini Local Government Area of Benue State, Onoja joined the Nigerian Armed Forces during a turbulent era and rose through the ranks by merit and study. Commissioned in the late 1960s, he served in the civil war and in numerous command and staff appointments nationwide. His military résumé is long and substantive: among other postings he served as Defence Adviser at the Nigerian Embassy in Cairo, held influential staff roles at Army Headquarters, commanded formations including the 3rd Armoured Division, and acted as Principal Staff Officer in the presidency. After thirty years in uniform he retired as a Major General in 1998. These are not trivia lines: they are the scaffolding of a career that blended operational leadership with institutional stewardship.

What sets Onoja apart is his insistence that military professionalism must be married to intellectual rigor. He earned advanced degrees while serving: he attended Cameron University, Oklahoma and Oklahoma State University, earning a degree in political science. He later obtained an M.Sc. in political science from the University of Jos, and a PhD in International Law and Diplomacy from the University of Jos., and later moved into academic mentorship, lecturing at postgraduate level. That rare combination, combat experience tempered by scholarship, explains why his opinions on security and national development carry weight far beyond his immediate circle.

Onoja's record as military administrator of Plateau State (1986–1988) and Katsina State (1988–1989) remains a central plank of his public reputation. Those were difficult assignments: Plateau with its complex ethno-religious mix and recurring tensions; Katsina with deep agricultural needs and large-scale development challenges. Onoja's administration in both places was notable for its emphasis on order, administrative competence and targeted projects. In Katsina, for example, he was associated with moves to advance irrigation and agricultural development, including engagement on projects such as the Zobe Dam irrigation initiative, signalling a practical orientation to rural prosperity rather than mere rhetorical governance. In Plateau his governance is widely remembered for project delivery and efforts to stabilise public life amid simmering tensions.

Two features of Onoja's statecraft deserve emphasis. First, he treated governance as management: budgets, staff, projects and follow-through mattered. Too often in transitional administrations, plans evaporate as priorities shift; Onoja's tenure stands out because many projects he initiated continued to serve local communities years later. Second, he understood that peace is a precondition for development — a lesson he has reiterated in later years as Nigeria wrestles with new security challenges.

After his gubernatorial spells, Onoja continued to shape institutions. At the Command and Staff College Jaji he directed the Faculty of Joint Studies; in the presidency and at divisional headquarters he managed complex organisations and personnel systems. These roles matter because they are where the future of the military (doctrine, values and personnel culture) is forged. Onoja's influence on training and professional standards helped strengthen the institutional backbone of the Nigerian Army at critical moments.

Equally important is Onoja's work after uniform. He won the trust of peers and younger professionals through alumni networks and professional associations. As president of a major alumni grouping, the Alumni Association of the National Institute (AANI), Kuru Jos, he oversaw programmes that intervened on members' careers, supported professional development and positioned the association as a constructive interlocutor with government agencies. Observers who tracked AANI's activities during his tenure note the organisation's expanded programmes, welfare interventions and its role as a bridge between retired professionals and serving institutions — a classic example of veteran leadership used for public good.

If governance and institutional work define

the outer architecture of Onoja's contribution, his role as mentor and public intellectual defines its human heart. He has been a steady presence in public debates on security, leadership and national values, arguing, with the moral clarity that comes from experience, that Nigeria's problems are as much about leadership ethics as they are about technical fixes. In lectures and interviews, he presses the point that vision minus values produces fragile development; that sustained national progress requires disciplined institutions and continuity of purpose. These are not pious platitudes: they are prescriptions rooted in decades of observing how reforms start, stall and sometimes succeed.

His public interventions are also marked by restraint and constitutionalism. On regional flashpoints and coup threats, Onoja has consistently advocated for diplomacy, institution-building and rule-bound responses rather than adventurism — a stance that privileges stability and the long game. That approach reflects the judicious temperament of a soldier who has seen the costs of disorder and understands that national resilience grows out of law, trust and the steady augmentation of civic capacity.

Across reportage and tributes there is a recurring theme: Onoja's personal integrity and his standing in his home community. He has been honoured with traditional titles, spoken of as an elder whose counsel is sought in times of crisis, and respected across regional divides. Such reputational capital is not manufactured; it is built through decades of reliable service, visible acts of leadership and a willingness to speak truth to power. For regions like the Middle Belt, where community trust is scarce and the stakes of leadership are high, figures like Onoja provide a stabilising example.

In Nigeria's current moment, when debates rage over security architecture, governance reform and digital and human capital development, Onoja's life offers several practical lessons.

1. Leadership requires both experience and learning. Onoja's trajectory from battlefield to classroom shows how expertise deepens when combined with lifelong study. In an era of quick fixes, durable policy requires the humility of testing assumptions against evidence and history.

2. Institutions trump personalities. Onoja's emphasis on training, doctrine and alumni support underlines a critical truth: healthy institutions carry a country through leadership transitions. Strengthening training colleges, command systems and civilian oversight is as important as celebrating charismatic leaders.

3. Development must be localised. Whether in promoting irrigation schemes in Katsina or supporting projects in Plateau, Onoja's governing instinct favoured development that improved livelihoods. Large visions matter, but their value is realised when farmers, traders and households experience better markets, roads and services.

4. Values are strategic. Onoja's frequent calls for ethical leadership and value-driven governance are not sentimental. They are practical prescriptions for states plagued by policy inconsistency and graft. Integrity, once institutionalised, lowers the transaction costs of governance and invites investment in public goods.

Even in retirement, Onoja remains engaged: lecturing at the University of Abuja's postgraduate school, contributing to public debates, and convening leaders around strategic themes. He is part of a cohort of elder statesmen who, rather than retreating into private life, choose to teach, advise and prod the nation toward better choices. For a country that often forgets its institutional memory, that continuing engagement is invaluable.

In conclusion, Major General Lawrence Onoja can be described as an exemplar of service with humility. Onoja's story is, at one level, simply the story of a committed public servant who did his jobs well. At another level it is a reminder that Nigeria's path forward depends on leaders who invest in people and institutions, who combine courage with study, and who understand that the true measure of accomplishment is not a headline but the sustained improvement of everyday lives. Onoja's achievements, in uniform and out of it, offer a blueprint worth reading, replicating and honouring in our civic life. If Nigeria wants a future that is safer, more prosperous and more just, it should pay closer attention to lessons from careers like his: disciplined, humble, scholarly and, above all, oriented to service.

Onoja's influence on training and professional standards helped strengthen the institutional backbone of the Nigerian Army at critical moments.

Study Finds Daily Quality Time Key to Women's Relationship Satisfaction

By Ayshatu S Rabo

A recent study has revealed that relationship satisfaction for many women is closely tied to consistent daily attention rather than occasional grand romantic gestures. According to the findings, spending about 47 minutes of focused, intentional time with a partner each day can significantly boost feelings of happiness, emotional security, and connection.

Experts emphasize that the quality of interaction matters more than the length of time spent together. Simple, distraction-free moments — such as meaningful conversations, shared activities, or expressions of affection — were found to have a deeper and more lasting impact than expensive gifts or rare displays of romance.

Relationship science supports the idea that time spent together in meaningful interaction strengthens emotional bonds. Research has shown that partners who spend more time talking and engaging with each other report significantly higher levels of relationship satisfaction and experienced closeness, beyond just being physically together.
PMC

Moreover, studies in relationship psychology indicate that everyday efforts to connect — even modest ones like daily check-ins or shared routines — are linked to improved emotional well-being and satisfaction over time. While specific numbers vary by study design, consistent daily engagement has been repeatedly associated with positive relationship outcomes, including greater emotional support, trust, and teamwork between partners.

Researchers emphasize that genuine presence — where partners are mentally and emotionally engaged — plays a crucial role in building trust and intimacy. In an era dominated by busy schedules, digital distractions, and constant interruptions, these mindful interactions were shown to strengthen emotional bonds and improve overall relationship fulfillment.

Psychologists also note that married and cohabiting couples who prioritize quality interactions — such as uninterrupted conversation and shared leisure time — tend to report higher relationship satisfaction and more positive conflict resolution than those who do not. This underscores a broader consensus in social science: consistent, engaged time together fosters deeper connection and resilience in relationships.

Experts say the findings serve as a reminder that healthy relationships are often nurtured through small, consistent acts of care and attention, reinforcing the idea that love is sustained in everyday moments rather than occasional grand gestures.

EMPOWERING REGISTERED PRIVATE SECURITY COMPANIES: A CRITICAL LEVER FOR NIGERIA'S FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM AND BANDITRY

MS Abubakar, PhD,CAS, FICRPC

Introduction

The spectre of terrorism and banditry continues to cast a long shadow over Nigeria's social and economic development. While the military and police remain the primary institutions tasked with securing the nation, the sheer scale and geographic spread of the threat have exposed the limits of a state-centric security architecture. In many advanced democracies, registered private security companies (PSCs) operate as essential partners to the state, providing specialised capabilities, creating jobs, and acting as force multipliers. In Nigeria, however, PSCs are shackled by a maze of red-tape and bureaucratic inertia that makes even the procurement of a modest unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) feel like "passing through the eye of a needle." This article argues that the Nigerian government must urgently rethink its approach, streamline regulations, and empower registered private security firms to contribute meaningfully to the national counter-terrorism and counter-banditry effort.

The Security Landscape: Why the State Alone Is Insufficient

Nigeria's security challenges are multifaceted. Boko Haram and its offshoot, the Islamic State in West Africa (ISWA), operate in the northeast, while armed bandits roam the northwest and central states, kidnapping civilians for ransom and attacking villages with impunity. The military, despite its numerical strength, is stretched thin across a terrain of 923,768 km², much of it rugged and poorly mapped. Intelligence gaps, limited aerial surveillance, and a shortage of trained personnel hamper rapid response.

In this context, the private sector can fill critical capability gaps. Private security firms possess the agility to acquire and operate

modern technology, such as drones, satellite-based communications, and armoured vehicles, far more quickly than the public procurement cycle allows. By acting as a "force multiplier," they can extend the reach of the state, free up regular troops for core combat operations, and provide early warning through continuous monitoring of vulnerable corridors.

The Current Regulatory Quagmire

Despite the obvious benefits, Nigerian PSCs face an array of obstacles that render them ineffective partners:

1. Import Licences and Customs Delays

– The process to import a UAV, a simple communications radio, or an armoured personnel carrier involves multiple approvals from the Ministry of Defence, the National Security Adviser's Office (NSA), and the Nigerian Customs Service. In practice, paperwork can linger for months, and many licences are denied without clear justification.

2. Bureaucratic Fragmentation

– Responsibility for private security regulation is split among the Ministry of Interior, the Nigeria Police Force, and the NSA. This overlapping authority creates "jurisdiction limbo," where a company must obtain separate clearances from each agency, each with its own set of forms and fees.

3. Lengthy Procurement Cycles

– Government tender processes are notoriously slow. Even when a PSC wins a contract, contract fulfilment is hampered by endless audits, price verification exercises, and post-delivery inspections that can stretch beyond the operational window of the equipment.

4. Restrictions on Dual-Use Technology

– Drones and sophisticated communication equipment are classified as "dual-use," meaning they are subject to the same export controls as military hardware. This classification imposes stringent end-user certificates and monitoring requirements that many small PSCs cannot meet. The cumulative effect is that PSCs spend more time navigating paperwork than deploying assets, while terrorists and bandits exploit modern tools—such as improvised explosive devices (IEDs) delivered by drones—to carry out attacks.

Lessons from Advanced Nations

In the United States, the United Kingdom, Israel, and South Africa, private security firms are integral to national security strategies:

In the United States, the United Kingdom, Israel, and South Africa, private security firms are integral to national security strategies

- United States

– The Department of Defense contracts private firms for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) missions using UAVs. The "Defense Innovation Initiative" encourages rapid acquisition of commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) technology, allowing companies to deliver capabilities within weeks rather than years.

- United Kingdom

– The Private Security Industry Act 2001 regulates PSCs but also creates a fast-track licensing pathway for companies providing "critical infrastructure protection." The government's "National Cyber Security Strategy" leverages private cyber-security firms to augment state cyber-defence capabilities.

- Israel

– Private firms develop and operate unmanned systems that complement the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). The "Homeland Security" ecosystem thrives on public-private partnerships, with the government providing clear guidelines and streamlined export licences for defence-related technology.

- South Africa

– The "Private Security Regulation Act" enables PSCs to obtain "Special Operations Licences" that permit the use of drones and other advanced equipment for anti-poaching and border surveillance, directly supporting law-enforcement agencies. These models demonstrate that a well-regulated, transparent partnership can enhance state capacity without compromising sovereignty or security.

How Empowered Private Security Can Transform Nigeria's Counter-Terrorism Effort

1. Enhanced Situational Awareness

– Drones equipped with night-vision and thermal imaging can monitor remote highways, forest fringes, and border crossings, providing real-time intelligence to the military and police.

2. Rapid Deployment of Resources

– Armoured vehicles owned by PSCs can be dispatched to rescue hostages or evacuate civilians in areas where government forces are delayed by terrain or security concerns.

3. Specialised Training and Capacity Building

– Private firms often employ former military and police personnel who can conduct advanced training for local security units, thereby raising overall operational standards.

4. Job Creation and Economic Development

– A thriving private security sector can absorb thousands of youths,

reducing the pool of potential recruits for criminal enterprises.

5. Cost Savings for the State
– Outsourcing non-core functions such as logistics, maintenance of surveillance equipment, and community-based intelligence gathering can reduce the financial burden on the defence budget.

6. Innovation Hub
– Private companies are more agile in adopting emerging technologies—artificial intelligence for pattern analysis, satellite imagery for predictive modelling, and encrypted communications—providing the state with cutting-edge tools without the usual procurement lag.
Policy Recommendations
To unlock these benefits, the Nigerian government should undertake a comprehensive reform of the regulatory framework governing private security:

1. Establish a Single Window for Licensing
– **Create an inter**-agency "National Private Security Authority" (NPSA) that consolidates import licences, operational permits, and compliance monitoring under one roof. This would eliminate duplicate paperwork and reduce processing time from months to weeks.

2. Fast-Track UAV and Communications Equipment Approvals
– Develop a "Critical Security Equipment" list that includes drones under 25 kg, handheld radios, and small armoured vehicles. Items on this list would automatically receive expedited clearance upon submission of a security vetting report.

3. Introduce a "Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Framework" for Security
– Model contracts on the US Defense Innovation Initiative, allowing PSCs to operate under "mission-specific" agreements that specify deliverables, performance metrics, and security protocols, rather than traditional fixed-price tenders.

4. Provide Tax Incentives and Grants for Local Manufacturing
– Encourage PSCs to assemble drones, communication kits, and armoured panels domestically by offering tax holidays, low-interest loans, and matching grants for research and development.

5. Mandate Regular Joint Exercises
– Institutionalise annual "Nigeria Security Expo" simulations where PSCs, the military, and police conduct coordinated drills using shared platforms (e.g., a common drone control centre). This builds interoperability and trust.

Nigeria is under siege by ruthless terrorist groups that do not differentiate between uniformed soldiers and civilian contractors

6. Strengthen Oversight Without Stifling Innovation
– While streamlining approvals, maintain robust vetting of PSC personnel, mandatory reporting of missions, and independent audits to prevent misuse of equipment.

7. Create a "National Security Innovation Fund"
– Allocate a modest percentage of the defence budget (e.g., 0.5 %) to fund pilot projects proposed by PSCs, with clear milestones and the possibility of scaling successful initiatives.

The Moral Imperative: Unity Over Blame
The recent tragic execution of Brigadier General Musa Uba underscores a painful reality: **Nigeria is under siege by ruthless terrorist groups that do not differentiate between uniformed soldiers and civilian contractors. In moments like these, the nation must rise above partisan finger**-pointing and ceaseless criticism of the military. The security apparatus is not a monolith; it is a tapestry of men and women in uniform, civil servants, and private actors—all of whom share the same goal: a safe, prosperous Nigeria.
The time for blame games is over. The time for decisive, collaborative action is now. By empowering registered private security companies, the government can harness the ingenuity, speed, and resources of the private sector, turning a fragmented response into a coordinated offensive against banditry and terrorism.

Conclusion
Nigeria stands at a crossroads. The continued marginalisation of private security firms not only squanders a valuable national asset but also cedes the technological high ground to those who would do the country harm. Streamlining regulations, creating a unified licensing framework, and incentivising innovation will enable PSCs to act as genuine force multipliers—extending the reach of the state, creating jobs, and fostering a culture of shared responsibility for national security.

If the Office of the National Security Adviser, together with the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Interior, can embrace this paradigm shift, the nation will be better equipped to confront the scourge of terrorism and banditry. The stakes are high, but the potential rewards—peace, stability, and a thriving economy—are worth the effort.

Let us, as a nation, choose partnership over paralysis, and together build a safer Nigeria for all.

THE NEW SECURITY FRONTIER:

How Charles Awuzie Is Building a Private-Sector–Driven Revolution for Safer Communitie

By Matthew Eloyi

Nigeria's security landscape is undergoing one of its most challenging periods in recent history. From insurgency to banditry, mass kidnappings to cybercrime, urban violence to oil theft, the nation faces threats that are layered, fast-moving and increasingly complex. Yet, in the midst of these overlapping crises, a reform-driven voice is pushing for a fresh way of thinking, one that blends state action with private-sector innovation, technology and community engagement. That voice is Charles Awuzie, convener of the National Private Security Conference (NPSC), who believes Nigeria must urgently redesign its security architecture to match the realities of a modern world.

In this exclusive conversation with OurNigeria News Magazine, Awuzie described Nigeria's security situation as "overstretched but not hopeless."

OurNigeria News: Nigeria is currently grappling with a complex security landscape, from insurgency to banditry, cybercrime, and urban violence. As someone invested in private-sector-driven solutions, how would you describe the current state of national security?

Charles Awuzie: I would describe Nigeria's current security situation as overstretched but not hopeless. We are dealing with multiple layers of threat at the same time - insurgency in some corridors, banditry and mass kidnappings, farmer–herder conflicts, oil theft in the Niger Delta, urban robbery and cult violence, plus a fast growing layer of cybercrime. The truth is simple: our traditional security architecture was designed for a different era. It was built for a world where threats were more linear and where government could monopolise force and intelligence. Today, threats are

networked, data driven and very fast. So what we are seeing is not just "insecurity." We are seeing a capacity gap and a coordination gap. The men and women in uniform are doing the best they can, but state institutions alone can no longer carry the full weight. That is why I keep saying: if we do not open up the security space to regulated private participation and technology, we will remain permanently reactive instead of proactive.

OurNigeria News: What key gaps do you see in Nigeria's security architecture that make a private security-focused national conference both timely and necessary?

Charles Awuzie: There are several critical gaps. First, a legal and policy gap. Our main private security laws are outdated. They imagine private security as night guards with torchlights, not as professional companies running surveillance centres, AI analytics, forensics labs and rapid response teams. The law has not caught up with reality. Second, a coordination gap. Private security companies, community vigilantes, technology firms and even cyber defenders are sitting on massive amounts of data and early warning signals, but there is no structured pipeline that connects them to the police, DSS, military and other agencies.

Third, a capacity and regulation gap. We have thousands of private security guards, but many are poorly trained, poorly paid and weakly regulated. At the same time, serious security technologists and investors are not incentivised or properly recognised as part of the security ecosystem.

The National Private Security Conference is necessary because we need one national table where lawmakers, regulators, security agencies, private operators, technologists and communities can sit down and say: "How do we redesign this architecture so that government plus regulated private security plus technology work together in a disciplined way?"

OurNigeria News: What inspired you to convene this event, and what core problems is it designed to address?

Charles Awuzie: Two things inspired this. First, my personal experience leading one of South Africa's cybersecurity companies and partnering with several private security companies. In South Africa ,there are millions of registered private security officers, thousands of licensed companies, and strong regulation. I have seen how private security, when properly regulated, can reduce pressure on the police, create jobs for young people and bring in serious investment in surveillance and technology.

Second, my frustration as a Nigerian watching us complain about insecurity, yet underutilise our own people. We have ex service men, vigilante groups, cyber experts and security entrepreneurs who are ready to help, but the legal framework and political will are not there.

So the NPSC is designed to tackle three core problems:

1. The policy problem- our laws and regulations need to be updated to allow a modern, technology enabled private security sector.

2. The coordination problem- we must create clear protocols for how private security, community structures and state agencies share information and work together.

3. The capacity and investment problem- we have to move from "cheap guards" to a professional industry that attracts capital, trains people properly and competes globally.

OurNigeria News: How will the NPSC bridge the long-standing coordination gap between public security agencies and private security operators in Nigeria?
Charles Awuzie: We are approaching that in three ways. First, by design. The NPSC is not a private sector echo chamber. We are intentionally bringing in representatives of the military, police, DSS, NSCDC and other agencies into the conversations from day one. They are not "guests" we will just listen to; they are co owners of the dialogue.
Second, through structured outputs. This is not just a talk show. We are working towards:

- a position paper on private security democratisation,
- model Standard Operating Procedures for collaboration,
- and recommendations on data sharing, joint operations and incident reporting between public and private actors.

Third, through relationships and trust. Sometimes the gap is not only legal, it is emotional. There is suspicion on both sides. By putting generals, commissioners, private security CEOs, technologists and community leaders in the same room, and by continuing that engagement beyond the conference, we want to build a culture where collaboration is normal, not exceptional.

OurNigeria News: What calibre of participants should Nigerians expect at the conference on June 13, 2026?

Charles Awuzie: Nigerians should expect serious people, not just plenty logos. We are bringing together:

- Senior government and security leaders including National Assembly members, committee chairs, and senior representatives from Defence, Interior, Police, and other agencies.
- Private security and defence industry leaders, owners and executives of licensed private security companies, defence tech firms, and risk management consultancies.
- International experts - people who have worked in mature private security environments like South Africa and Australia, to
- share real models that work.
- Technology innovators - AI surveillance companies, cyber security experts, tracking and telematics providers, forensics and data analytics firms.
- Academia, civil society and media researchers, policy think tanks, journalists who shape public understanding of security issues.
- And very importantly, Nigerian youths and community leaders because you cannot talk about private security reform without the communities and the young people who will work in this industry.

So this is not a "one sector" event. It is a cross section of everyone who has something serious to contribute to a safer Nigeria.

OurNigeria News: Private security firms in Nigeria often complain of limited training, weak regulation, and low investment. How will the NPSC help reposition the industry for professionalism and global competitiveness?

Charles Awuzie: We want to move the conversation from "complaints" to concrete levers of change.

At NPSC we are focusing on:

1. Regulatory reform - pushing for a modern legal framework that sets clear licensing tiers, training standards, accountability mechanisms and sanctions for abuse. When rules are clear and fair, serious investors and serious operators show up.

2.Professional standards and certification - we are exploring collaborations around national training curricula, certified courses, and partnerships with universities and international bodies, so that guards, analysts and managers can progress in a real career path.

3. Investment narratives - we want to show investors, banks, and large corporates that private security technology and services are not just a cost centre; they are a massive investment and employment opportunity. When investors see structure and returns, capital will follow.
4. Showcasing best in class - giving a platform to firms that are already doing things right in Nigeria and across Africa, so others can benchmark and step up.

Our aim is that in a few years, when you say "Nigerian private security," people will think of professionalism, technology and standards, not just "man at the gate with a stick."

OurNigeria News: What role will emerging technologies play at the conference, and how prepared is Nigeria's private security sector to adopt them?

Charles Awuzie: Technology will be at the centre of this conference. We are building sessions and demos around:

- AI powered video analytics and surveillance
- smart tracking for vehicles, assets and people
- cyber security and critical infrastructure protection
- data driven intelligence and crime prediction
- biometrics and access control
- integrated command and control centres.

In terms of readiness, I will be honest: Nigeria's private security sector is uneven. Some companies are still operating like it is 1995. Others are already deploying CCTV networks, command centres, tracking platforms and cyber teams that can compete globally.

The job of NPSC is to close that gap. We want to help move the industry from "manpower heavy, tech light" to "manpower plus strong technology." That means education, partnerships, and policies that make it easier for serious companies to invest in R&D, in AI, in cyber, and to plug into national systems.

OurNigeria News: With Gen. Christopher Musa now serving as the Minister of Defence, what is your assessment of his appointment, and what do you expect his leadership to bring to Nigeria's security and defence ecosystem?

Charles Awuzie: Gen. Christopher Musa is coming in with very relevant frontline experience. He has led joint task forces in some of the most difficult theatres, and he understands both kinetic operations and the political complexities of modern conflict. My expectation is that his leadership will help push three things:

1. Better jointness
We need stronger coordination between the Army, Navy, Air Force, intelligence agencies and now the wider security ecosystem, including private partners.

2. Openness to innovation
The Ministry of Defence is poised to become a driver of technology adoption, not just

hardware procurement. AI, drones, data analytics, cyber defence these are not "nice to have," they are now core to defence. If you listened to General Musa on his appearance at the Senate, you would agree that we now have a Minister who understands Technology.

3. Structured partnership with regulated private actors

The state must remain the ultimate guarantor of security, but it should also know how to harness private capacity in surveillance, maintenance, logistics, and specialised skills.

Our Minister of Defence understands that a smart state uses all legitimate capacity available, the kind of reforms we are talking about at NPSC will find a willing partner in his office.

OurNigeria News: Looking beyond the conference, what long-term reforms or policy actions would you like to see emerge from the discussions at the NPSC?

Charles Awuzie: There are several, but let me highlight a few:

- A new, modern Private Security and Security Technology Act that recognises different categories of operators, from guarding to high end tech and intelligence services.
- Creation of a strong, independent regulatory authority for private security, similar to PSIRA in South Africa, with real powers to license, monitor, sanction and protect the public.
- Clear frameworks for data and intelligence sharing between private sector and government agencies, with safeguards for privacy and human rights.
- Structured programmes to convert vigilante and community security structures into trained, licensed private security operators, instead of leaving them in a legal grey zone.
- Incentives for investment and training, so that companies that invest in training, technology and compliance see real advantages.
-

If we come out of this process with a clear roadmap and political commitment to implement these reforms, then NPSC would have done its job.

OurNigeria News: In what ways do you believe the NPSC can empower citizens, communities, and private organizations to become proactive stakeholders in national security?

Charles Awuzie: For me, this is the heart of it. NPSC is not only about companies and government. It is about ordinary people claiming their role in security. We want to empower citizens and communities to:

- Understand how regulated private security can protect their streets, schools, farms and businesses, instead of relying only on over stretched state forces.
- Organise better community and estate security structures that are linked to formal systems, not operating in isolation.
- Demand higher standards from both private security providers and government agencies, because when you know what "good" looks like, you refuse to accept "anything goes."

For private organisations, we want them to see that security is not just "cost." It is business continuity, reputation and national responsibility. If, after this conference, more communities are better organised, more companies are investing in proper security solutions, more youths are being trained for security careers, and more policymakers are thinking of security as a whole-of-society project, then NPSC will have empowered the right people.

At the end of the day, my belief is simple: Security is everybody's business. Government must lead, but citizens, communities and the private sector must co-own the solution. The National Private Security Conference is one of the platforms where that new social contract can begin.

Tobi Amusan: Sprinting Into History and Carrying Nigeria's Hurdles Hope

By Esther Bello, Abuja

Nigeria's own Tobi Amusan continued to write her name across global athletics in 2025, adding another defining chapter to a career already rich in milestones and inspiration. At the 2025 World Athletics Championships in Tokyo, Amusan delivered a commanding performance in the women's 100m hurdles, capturing silver with an impressive 12.29 seconds—one of the fastest times of her career and a standout moment for Nigeria at the global meet.

Amusan's Tokyo medal was Nigeria's only podium finish at the championships, underscoring her status as the country's most reliable track ambassador on the world stage.

But this achievement did not emerge from nowhere; it is the continuation of a longer story of excellence. In 2022, Amusan became the first Nigerian to win a World Championship gold medal in the 100m hurdles, setting a world record of 12.12 seconds in the semifinals and then closing with a wind-assisted 12.06 in the final. That performance not only redefined African sprint hurdles but also placed Nigeria permanently on global athletics maps.

Amusan's journey has seen her excel at every level—from winning African Youth and junior titles to dominating the Diamond League, where she has repeatedly topped the 100m hurdles podium and set meet records. In 2024 she also set an African record in the indoor 60m hurdles (7.75 seconds), further demonstrating her range and consistency across sprint hurdles.

Beyond the medals and records, Amusan has become a symbol of resilience. She rebounded from a provisional doping suspension, cleared unanimously by the Court of Arbitration for Sport, and returned to elite competition without losing momentum.

At just 28 years old in 2025, Amusan continues to redefine Nigerian athletics, balancing world-beating speed with enduring poise—proof that world-class greatness can emerge not just from talent, but from tenacity and belief.

Sa'ada Isa Yahaya:

A Young Voice Refusing Silence

By Jerry Adesewo

Some writers arrive early with polish, and there are writers who arrive early with urgency. Sa'ada Isa Yahaya belongs firmly to the latter. At a time when many of her peers are still finding language for themselves, Sa'ada is already using language to confront history, patriarchy, violence, faith, and the brutal inheritance of womanhood.

A Nigerian teen writer and a member of the Hill-Top Creative Arts Foundation, Sa'ada has emerged as one of the most celebrated young poetic voices in the country. Her growing list of recognitions tells only part of the story: she is a three-time winner of the on-the-spot poetry prize at HIASFEST, winner of The Art Place Poetry Slam, first runner-up at the AIPFEST Slam 2024, and a finalist or nominee for several prestigious prizes, including the Idumaese Alao Prize for Literature, the National Copyright Commission Award, the Creators of Justice Literary Award (Youth Category), the BCD Utulu Prize, Wakaso Poetry Prize, and the Dawn Poetry Project.

Her poems appear or are forthcoming in respected literary spaces such as Blue Marble Review, Còn-Scìò, Poetry NND Column, Molecule, IHRAM Press, Uproar Magazine, Libretto Magazine, Ice Floe Press, and The Kalahari Review, among others. Yet beyond accolades and publications, what distinguishes Sa'ada is the moral clarity of her voice — a refusal to romanticise pain, and a commitment to naming violence exactly as it is.

A Poem as Testimony

The poem below is emblematic of Sa'ada's work: intimate yet political, tender yet furious, rooted in personal conversation but expanding into collective indictment. It is written not merely to be admired, but to unsettle.

BONE FIELD

Because the saying goes: Like
mother, like daughter...

My sister asks if we will become
gravelands like our mother
and the ones before her—
a congregation of women who lost
themselves
to the war brewing in their homes,
forced to bow before men like their
messiahs.

She asks like she doesn't know
we are our mother's daughters
and without choice,
we've inherited a bouquet of
wounds.

We are stuck in a World War three,
four, five.
Every day of our lives,
we are reminded that women are
remnants
of a lost breath,
striding corpses.

Even history is baffled
by the brand new ways invented
to install abuse into women.

Like the origin of a rumour,
we have never known the face of
justice.

The sky is a witness
to the unholy carnage of a girl's
body
like the dissection of beef
yet chooses to call it a sacred
execution,
teaches the sun to run into the arms
of the killer
and worship him.

I ask my sister,
if this is not proof enough
to make her see
that the world is blessed
with an abundance of astigmatism,
tragic how it sees everything but
what it should,
sees everything but the untamed
lust
growing in a boy's eyes.

Says boys will always be boys
but boys have become men
and men are mutating into
monsters.

Monsters cruel enough
to bury doom in a woman's body
the first time she doesn't wear
silence
like consent,
monsters moulding girls into
hashtags,
into question marks,
into trending.

On X,
I walk into the post made by an
unmarried woman
in her late 30's
and I mistake it for a room set on
fire,
the comment section turning
into a virtual rape scene.

Isn't this the definition of sin?

God, if this poem gets to you,
send down salvation.
Send down salvation,
so fierce it impels the world
to give a myriad of damns about us.

Reading the Wound

What Sa'ada achieves in this poem is not merely expression, but excavation. The opening line, "a sister asking whether they will become 'gravelands' like their mother", immediately establishes inheritance as trauma rather than tradition. Womanhood here is not passed down as wisdom, but as injury. The phrase "a bouquet of wounds" is particularly devastating: pain arranged, beautified, and handed over as destiny.

The poem's repeated invocation of war — "World War three, four, five" — reframes domestic and gender-based violence as a continuous, global conflict. There is no armistice for women. The battlefield is the home, the street, the comment section, the body itself.

One of the poem's sharpest interventions is its refusal to spiritualise violence. When the sky "chooses to call it a sacred execution," Sa'ada exposes how culture, religion, and silence collaborate in excusing brutality. Her use of social media imagery — women turned into "hashtags" and "trending" — grounds the poem firmly in the present, where digital spaces replicate physical harm.

Yet the poem is not nihilistic. Its final address to God is not submission but demand. Salvation, in Sa'ada's vision, is not personal escape; it is systemic outrage. A salvation "so fierce" that the world is forced to care.

Why Sa'ada, Why Now?

Sa'ada Isa Yahaya writes from a generation that refuses to whisper. Her poetry is fearless without being careless, emotional without being indulgent, political without losing lyric force. She understands that language can be both wound and weapon — and she chooses the latter.

As OurNigeria Magazine Girl of the Month, Sa'ada represents more than talent. She represents a shift: young Nigerian women using art not just to survive the world, but to interrogate it, indict it, and insist on something better.

If literature is a mirror, Sa'ada holds it up without apology. And if poetry is prophecy, hers is already warning us: silence is no longer an option.

Also available online at https://ournigerianews.com/saada-isa-yahaya-a-young-voice-refusing-silence/ | Our Nigeria News Magazine

Five Years After:

Remembering Sam Nda Isaiah

By Jerry Adesewo

When I, on behalf of Arojah Royal Theatre, received the call asking me to produce a bespoke drama to celebrate Sam Nda Isaiah, I knew without hesitation, that I had finally found the much-needed opportunity, or perhaps the courage, to do what I should have done five years ago. I was not engaged because of my private admiration for Sam, but because of the public identity I have built as a theatre maker. Still, the invitation felt personal. It felt overdue.

Time has a way of dulling pain while sharpening memory. Five years after his passing, Sam's name still summons a presence that feels unfinished—like a conversation paused mid-sentence. He was not merely a media proprietor or a public intellectual; he was a force of conscience in a country too accustomed to silence, fear, and convenient neutrality.

That was, in fact, the lasting impression from my one and only meeting with him. It must have been in the company of Mallam Ibrahim Sheme, though I can no longer be certain of the setting. I had gone to invite him to an event. What I remember clearly is the exchange—and Sam's intervention, brief as it was. He looked up and said, simply: "That is why the press must remain unbowed. And to do that, we need courage."

That sentence stayed with me.
From that day, I followed him closely. I made it a point not to miss his columns. When he declared for the presidency, I told myself I would find my way into his team—not in search of position, but out of conviction. Even from that single encounter in his leadership office, his honesty felt unmistakable. It felt rare.

Sam's courage never sought applause. It was not performative; it was principled. He spoke when speaking carried consequences. He published when publishing could provoke power. He stood his ground not because it was fashionable, but because retreat was never an option for a man who believed Nigeria deserved honesty—raw, sometimes uncomfortable, but always necessary.

What struck me most was his humanity. Behind the sharp columns and firm positions was a man deeply invested in people—especially the unseen and unheard. He carried the burden of the nation not as an abstract idea, but as lived reality. He understood that journalism, at its best, is not about headlines, but about human lives, dignity, and accountability. That understanding shaped his work and softened his strength.

Then there was his nationalism—unapologetic, demanding, and rooted in hope rather than nostalgia. Sam believed in Nigeria with a stubbornness that refused despair. He criticised the country because he loved it. He challenged power because he believed the nation could be better than its current self. His patriotism was not blind loyalty; it was active responsibility.

For years, I carried a quiet regret: that I had not found the right artistic language to honour him when the wound was still fresh. Grief, after all, can silence even those whose vocation is expression. But this invitation—to create, to interpret, to remember through theatre—felt like permission. Permission to confront loss. Permission to translate memory into meaning. Permission to finally say thank you. I took it with both hands.

Producing the ten-minute drama titled SAM NDA ISAIAH: PRESS UNBOWED was not an act of closure; it was an act of continuity. It is my way of insisting that Sam Nda Isaiah's courage still matters, his humanity still instructs, and his nationalism still challenges us. Five years on, his voice echoes—not as nostalgia, but as a summons.

Listening to guests that night—friends, colleagues, and close associates—reminisce about their time with him, about who Sam was to them, the impact he had on their lives, and how deeply he is missed, I found myself thinking of what might come next. Perhaps the next step is to begin conceiving a fuller theatrical work in his honour.

Nigeria still needs men like Sam. And until we produce them in abundance, we must keep telling his story—honestly, boldly, and without fear.

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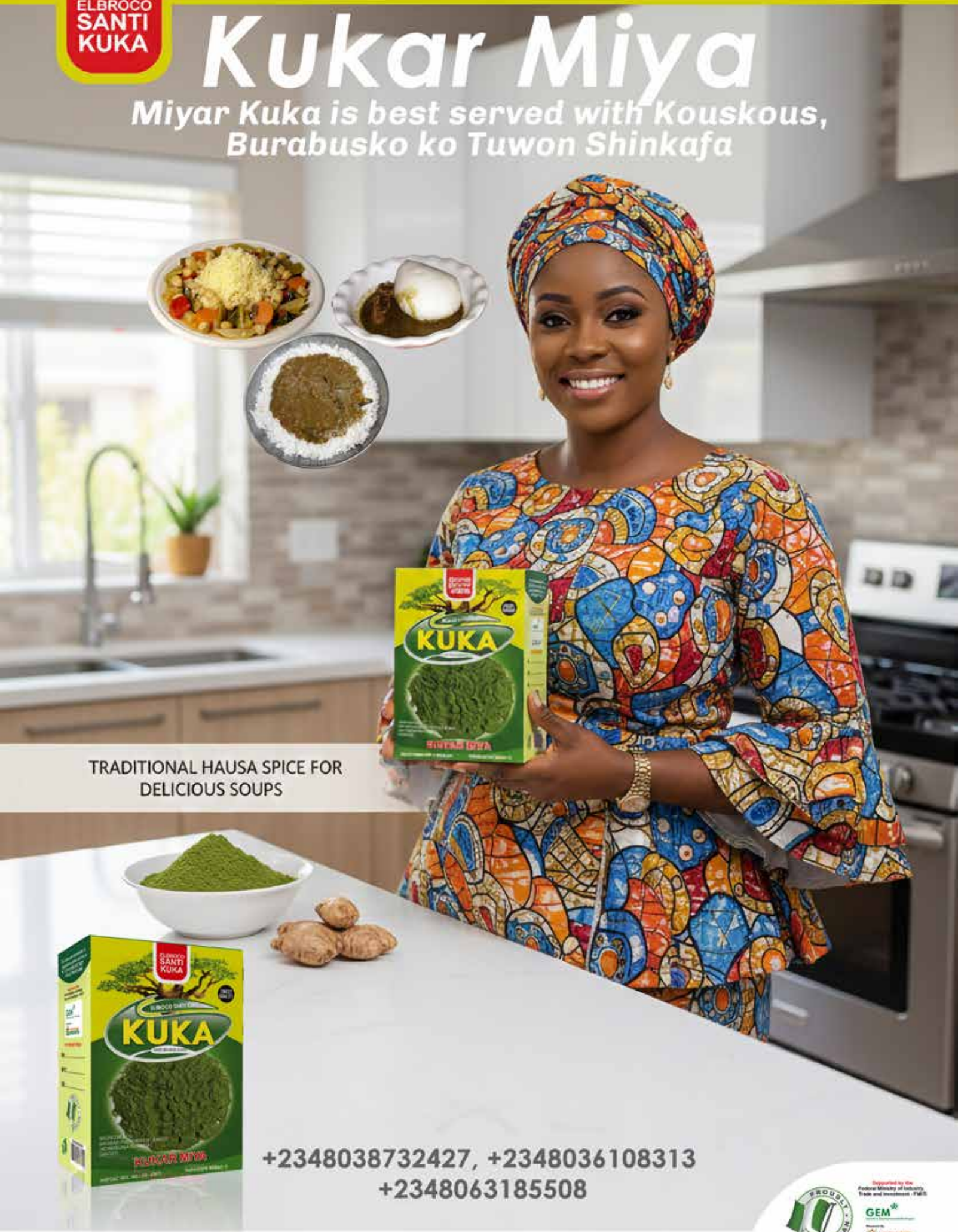

+2348038732427, +2348036108313
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www.santikuka.com, info@santikuka.com