

# THE AFRICAN FORUM SCOTLAND

Celebrating Excellence | Promoting Enterprise

## MAGAZINE

SEPTEMBER 2012

Launch Issue | Volume 1

## TOP 50 INFLUENTIAL AFRICANS

THE RACE IS ON!

### LEYMAH GBOWEE

NOBEL PEACE PRIZE LAUREATE 2011

Reaping the gains of Sarbanes Oxley

### The gains of Jonathan's diplomacy

A scorecard of President  
Jonathan Goodluck

### Climate Change

African leaders and  
UNFCCC talks

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to the event of the year

**The Annual African Achievement Awards Scotland 2012**  
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GUEST SPEAKER: Mr Tony Elumelu CFR, Chairman, Heirs Holdings

#### INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Background on the Scotland  
Malawi Partnership

#### POLITICS

Finally, the final word

#### PROFILE

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Alhaji Ibrahim Dankwanbo



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# Welcome Messages



**Beltus Etchu Ojong**  
**FRSA, Accredited**  
**Assesor (EFQM)**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**African Forum Scotland**

I welcome you all on the first edition of the African Forum Magazine covering the special inaugural African Achievement Award for Excellence, taking

place on the 16th November 2012 in Glasgow, at the 5 Star Crowne Plaza Hotel.

The African continent continues to undergo radical transformation over the years. The Annual African Achievement Award for Excellence is a unique blend of a cherished virtue that is seeking to celebrate Africans and non-Africans alike, who have remarkably and sustainably contributed and continue to contribute to the radical advancement of Africa and the African people, in Scotland, U.K, and Africa and around the world.

The deserving individuals and or organisations/institutions must have recorded undisputed credentials of unparalleled attributes within the continental borders. The epistemological basis for this adventure is African, and those who have impacted on African communities, is exemplified in the belief of African cosmology, that if the good works of a person are appreciated, he and others would do more and that in the fullness of time ... the society at large would be the overall beneficiary.

Under the Award for Excellence, 15 individuals and institutions both Africans and non-Africans will be honoured. They will not just be honoured for what they were able to do for Africa and their communities, but how they were able to achieve or do so much under the circumstances. While we concede that there are equally qualified individuals and institutions, who have done so remarkably well for Africa and for which they deserve same or better recognition, we wish to put on record that we are only beginning a process and theirs will be an enhancement of what will be giving out on the night of the 16th November 2012, when they will take their turn.

The award is the most distinguished and prestigious international awards event that celebrates exemplary and outstanding achievement of excellence by African Citizens of the world and or organisations/institutions, who have sacrificed relentlessly and served the continent honourably hence contributing to the socio-economic development of Africans in Scotland, UK, Africa and around the world. The event is designed to highlight, profile, and reward significant contributions made by Africans, non-Africans and institutions to the African communities here in the U.K. and around the world.

Africa has been blessed with many distinguished personalities, whose sojourn on this planet has provided a bright lustre on our continent, from diplomat, academia, literature, science, humanitarian cause, charitable initiatives, social service, religion, arts, sports and politics.

The events remember these men and women of many parts, as their story is one of solid achievement.

I trust all attending will have an enjoyable evening and offer our congratulations to all nominees and eventual winners.



**Chief Superintendent**  
**Grant Manders**  
**Crime & Safer**  
**Communities**  
**Directorate**

"It gives me great pleasure to offer the best wishes and support of Strathclyde Police to the annual African Achievement Awards 2012.

I am delighted that we enjoy such good relations with our vibrant and active African Communities in the Strathclyde area and I look forward to building upon our strong foundations of trust and mutual respect in the future.

This celebration, recognising the outstanding achievements by those from within our African Communities, is yet another opportunity for Strathclyde Police to engage and positively interact with our many communities and I am delighted to extend my congratulations to all concerned."





**Councillor  
Sadie Docherty**  
Lord Provost  
of Glasgow

It is with great pleasure and pride that I send this message to everyone involved in bringing to Glasgow, the very first African Achievement Awards Scotland.

I could think of no better city in which to hold the 2012 inaugural awards ceremony celebrating African achievement across Scotland and beyond.

I wish your event every success and I am delighted that Glasgow, which last year hosted the much lauded Mobo Awards, continues to be chosen as a great place to do business. Also a place that is synonymous with recognising and celebrating diversity across our communities.

I am confident this awards ceremony will showcase all that is great about Africans living and working in our country as well as illustrate the enduring links with the people of that great and proud continent.



**Humza Yousaf MSP**  
Minister for External  
Affairs and International  
Development,  
Scottish Government

"I would like to welcome the celebration of the first ever Scottish Annual African Achievement Awards in the great city of Glasgow.

The African Achievement Awards will showcase the great success of African businesses, organisations and stakeholders within Scotland, and demonstrates the diversity within and between the African and wider communities.

The achievements of members of the African community are significant and allow the visionary work and support of African Forum Scotland to be publicised and appreciated.

My new role as Minister for External Affairs and International Development has given me a greater understanding of the importance of the work of organisations such as African Forum Scotland.

It is vital that the links between Scotland and Africa continue to grow and flourish, and sustainable projects within the African communities in Scotland and Africa are encouraged.

Scotland is a nation of emigrants and immigrants, diverse in its culture, communities and even cuisine. That diversity is not something to be feared but celebrated and the Annual African Achievement Awards is the perfect way to do this."



**Hanzala Malik MSP**

"The African Forum Scotland and the establishment of the African Achievement Awards is an indication of the growing self-confidence of the African community in Scotland in general and Glasgow in particular. I hope that the Forum will develop into an

effective voice representing the African community and I wish them every success in the future."

Hanzala Malik MSP lives in Glasgow and works extensively across the community including with those providing services for young people, the unemployed and the homeless. He believes passionately in drawing on the strengths of local communities especially in these challenging economic times.

Hanzala Malik was born in Glasgow and has been a Glasgow City Councillor since 1995. He was elected as an MSP for Glasgow in May 2011. He strives to make use of the opportunities from Glasgow hosting the 2014 Commonwealth Games to strengthen community cohesion, support regeneration and stimulate economic growth.

Hanzala holds a BSc in Computing with Business Administration from the University of Paisley, gained in 1995. He has worked in both the private and public sectors including serving as a Special Police Constable and with the Territorial Army.

The main focus of Hanzala's work in Glasgow is to support people to realise their potential, both here in Scotland (and Glasgow in particular) and in the developing world. Hanzala is multilingual, fluent in English, Urdu and Punjabi. Keen on working with people from differing backgrounds and cultures and interested in international relations. Hanzala's passion and skills in building international links has continued in the Scottish Parliament where he is currently the Vice Convener for Europe and External Relations Committee.

Hanzala's most recent work includes establishing and chairing the Cross Party Group on the Middle East and South Asia. In 2012 the group will focus on supporting the diaspora from this region engage better with the political process in Scotland and to build upon international links with the Region where the CPG wishes to augment special relationships and encourage trade and educational links. ■

# Leymah Roberta Gbowee

Leymah Roberta Gbowee (born 1 February 1972) is a Liberian peace activist responsible for leading a women's peace movement that helped bring an end to the Second Liberian Civil War in 2003. This led to the election of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in Liberia, the first African nation with a female president. She, along with Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Tawakkul Karman, were awarded the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize "for their non-violent struggle for the safety of women and for women's rights to full participation in peace-building work."

## Early life

Leymah Gbowee was born in central Liberia on 1 February 1972. At the age of 17, she was living with her parents and two of her three sisters in Monrovia, when the First Liberian Civil War erupted in 1989, throwing the country into bloody chaos until 1996. "As the war subsided.... I learned about a program run by UNICEF... training people to be social workers who would then counsel those traumatized by war," wrote Gbowee in her 2011 memoir, *Mighty Be Our Powers*. She did a three-month training, which led her to be aware of her own abuse at the hands of the father of her two young children, son Joshua "Nuku" and daughter Amber. Searching for peace and sustenance for her family, Gbowee followed her partner, called Daniel in her memoir, to Ghana where she and her growing family (her second son, Arthur, was born) lived as virtually homeless refugees and almost starved. She fled with her three children, riding a bus on credit for over a week "because I didn't have a cent," back to the chaos of Liberia, where her parents and other family members still lived.

In 1998, in an effort to gain admission to an associate of arts degree program in social work at Mother Patern College of Health Sciences, Gbowee became a volunteer within a program operating out of St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Monrovia, where her mother was a women's leader and Gbowee had passed her teenage years. It was called the Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Program (THRP), and it marked the beginning of Gbowee's journey toward being a peace activist.

The THRP's offices were new, but the program had a history. Liberia's churches had been active in peace efforts ever since the civil war started, and in 1991, Lutheran pastors, lay leaders, teachers and health workers joined with the Christian

Health Association of Liberia to try to repair the psychic and social damage left by the war.

As she studied and worked her way toward her associate of art degree, conferred

in 2001, she applied her training in trauma healing and reconciliation to trying to rehabilitate some of the ex-child soldiers of Charles Taylor's army. Surrounded by the images of war, she realized that "if any changes were to be made in society it had to be by the mothers". Gbowee gave birth to a second daughter Nicole "Pudu", making her the mother of four, as she engaged in the next chapter of her life's journey – rallying the women of Liberia to stop the violence that was destroying their children.

## Leading mass women's movement

In the spring of 2002, Gbowee was spending her days employed in trauma-healing work and her evenings as the unpaid leader of WIPNET in Liberia. Her children, now including an adopted daughter named Lucia "Malou" (bringing the number of children to five), were living in Ghana under her sister's care. Falling asleep in the WIPNET office one night, she awoke from a dream where God had told her, "Gather the women and pray for peace!" I and two Lutheran women workers, including a respected evangelist named Sister Esther, of her dream. They helped her to understand that the dream was not meant for others, as Gbowee thought; it was a necessary for Gbowee herself to act upon it.

Following a WIPNET training session in Liberia, Gbowee and her allies, including a Mandingo-Muslim woman called Asatu, began by "going to the mosques on Friday at noon after prayers, to the markets on Saturday morning, to two churches every Sunday." Their flyers read: "We are tired! We are tired of our children being killed! We are tired of being raped! Women, wake up – you have a voice in the peace process!" They also handed out simple drawings explaining their purpose to the many women who couldn't read.



(Photo credit: Jon Styer/EMU)

By the summer of 2002, Gbowee was recognized as the spokeswoman and inspirational leader of the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace, described as a peace movement that started with local women praying and singing in a fish market. Working across religious and ethnic lines, Gbowee led thousands of Christian and Muslim women to gather in Monrovia for months. They prayed for peace, using Muslim and Christian prayers, and eventually held daily nonviolent demonstrations and sit-ins in defiance of orders from tyrannical President Charles Taylor.

They staged protests that included the threat of a curse and a sex strike: "The [sex] strike lasted, on and off, for a few months. It had little or no practical effect, but it was extremely valuable in getting us media attention." In a highly risky move, the women finally occupied a field that had been used for soccer; it was beside Tubman Boulevard, the route Charles Taylor traveled twice a day, to and from Capitol Hill. To make themselves more recognizable as a group, all of the women wore T-shirts that were white, signifying peace, with the WIPNET logo and white hair ties. Taylor finally granted a hearing for the women on April 23, 2003. With more than 2,000 women massed outside his executive mansion, Gbowee was the person designated to make their case to him. Gbowee positioned her face to be seen by Taylor but directed her words to Grace Minor, the president of the senate and the only female government official present.

We are tired of war. We are tired of running. We are tired of begging for bulgur wheat. We are tired of our children being raped. We are now taking this stand, to secure the future of our children. Because we believe, as custodians of society, tomorrow our children will ask us, "Mama, what was your role during the crisis?"

In her book, Gbowee reveals that Grace Minor quietly "gave a great deal of her own money... at enormous personal risk" to the women's protest movement. The protesting women extracted a promise from President Charles Taylor to attend peace talks in Ghana to negotiate with the rebels from Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy and another newer rebel group, MODEL.

In June 2003, Gbowee led a delegation of Liberian women to Ghana to put pressure on the warring factions during the peace-talk process. At first the women sat in a daily demonstration outside the posh hotels where the negotiators met, pressuring for progress in the talks. When the talks dragged from early June through late July, with no progress made and violence continuing in Liberia, Gbowee led dozens of women, eventually swelling to a couple of hundred, inside the hotel. They then "dropped down, in front of the glass door that was the main entrance to the meeting room." They held signs that said: "Butchers and murderers of the Liberian people -- STOP!" Gbowee passed a message to the lead mediator, General Abubakar (a former president of Nigeria), that the women would interlock their arms and remain seated in the hallway, holding the delegates "hostage" until a peace agreement was reached. Abubakar, who proved to be

sympathetic to the women, announced with some amusement: "The peace hall has been seized by General Leymah and her troops." When the men tried to leave the hall, Leymah and her allies threatened to rip their clothes off: "In Africa, it's a terrible curse to see a married or elderly woman deliberately bare herself." With Abubakar's support, the women remained sitting outside the negotiating room during the following days, ensuring that the "atmosphere at the peace talks changed from circuslike to somber."

The Liberian war ended officially weeks later, with the signing of the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement on August 18, 2003. In addition to bringing an end to 14 years of warfare in Liberia, this women's movement led to the 2005 election of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as president of Liberia, the first elected woman leader of a country in Africa. Sirleaf is co-recipient of the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize. In Sirleaf's re-election campaign of 2011, Gbowee endorsed her.

### Consolidating the peace

Recognizable when wearing their white WIPNET T-shirts, Gbowee and the other Liberian women activists were treated as national heroines by Liberians in the streets for weeks following the signing of the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Yet Gbowee wrote of their unceasing nervousness about the fragility of the peace that they had helped birth:

A war of fourteen years doesn't just go away. In the moments we were calm enough to look around, we had to confront the magnitude of what had happened in Liberia. Two hundred and fifty thousand people were dead, a quarter of them children. One in three were displaced, with 350,000 living in internally displaced persons camps and the rest anywhere they could find shelter. One million people, mostly women and children, were at risk of malnutrition, diarrhea, measles and cholera because of contamination in the wells. More than 75 percent of the country's physical infrastructure, our roads, hospitals and schools, had been destroyed.

Gbowee expressed particular concern for the "psychic damage" borne by Liberians:

A whole generation of young men had no idea who they were without a gun in their hands. Several generations of women were widowed, had been raped, seen their daughters and mothers raped, and their children kill and be killed. Neighbors had turned against neighbors; young people had lost hope, and old people, everything they had painstakingly earned. To a person, we were traumatized.",

Amid the destruction and unending needs, Gbowee was appalled by the arrogance, ignorance and overall cultural insensitivity of the United Nations agencies dispatched to help disarm the country, keep the peace, establish procedures for democratic governance, and initiate rebuilding efforts. "People who have lived through a terrible conflict may be hungry and desperate, but they're not stupid (Gbowee's emphasis). They often have very good ideas about how peace can evolve, and they need to be asked." Gbowee advocated for involving Liberian civil society, especially women's organizations, in



restoring the country. She grew frustrated with the way the "UN was spending many millions of dollars in Liberia, but most of it was on [their own] staffing resources.... If they had just given some of that money to the local people, it would have made a real difference."

By the late fall and winter of 2003-04, "the world of conflict resolution, peace-building and the global women's movement" was calling Gbowee to write papers, come to conferences and otherwise explain the experience and views of WIPNET. Thelma Ekiyor encouraged Gbowee to overcome her lack of self-esteem among "highly intelligent people who held master's degrees and represented powerful institutions" by reading and studying further to understand the theories circulating in the world of peacebuilding. She read *The Peace Book* by Louise Diamond, known for advocating multi-track diplomacy, and *The Journey Toward Reconciliation* and *The Little Book of Conflict Transformation*, both written by John Paul Lederach, the founding director of the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite University. She went to a USAID conference in New York, her first trip out of Africa, to a conference in South Africa, and to Switzerland where she dealt with the Nigerian in charge of UN programs in Liberia.

### Awards and recognition

- 2012 Olympic flag bearer in the 2012 Summer Olympics opening ceremony
- 2012 Gbowee Peace Foundation Africa is established
- 2011 Nobel Peace Prize laureate
- 2011 University of Massachusetts Lowell Greeley Scholar for Peace Studies
- 2011 Villanova Peace Award from Villanova University
- 2011 Alumna of the Year, Eastern Mennonite University
- 2010 John Jay Medal for Justice from the John Jay College of Criminal Justice

- 2010 Living Legends Award for Service to Humanity
- 2010 Joli Humanitarian Award from Riverdale Country School
- 2009 Gruber Prize for Women's Rights
- 2009 John F. Kennedy Profile in Courage Award
- 2009 "Honor Award for Courageous Commitment for Human Rights of Women" by the Filmfestival Women's Worlds, TERRE DES FEMMES, Germany
- 2008 Women's eNews Leaders for the 21st Century Award
- 2007 Blue Ribbon for Peace from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University

### Education and training

- Associate of Arts degree in social work (2001) from Mother Patern College of Health Sciences in Monrovia, Liberia
- Master of Arts in Conflict Transformation (2007) from Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Virginia
- Certifications: Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Training at the United Nations Institute for Training, the Healing Victims of War Trauma Center in Cameroon, and Non-Violent Peace Education in Liberia

### Professional career

Leymah Gbowee is the executive director of the Women Peace and Security Network Africa, based in Accra, Ghana,[93] which builds relationships across the West African sub-region in support of women's capacity to prevent, avert, and end conflicts. She is a founding member and former coordinator of the Women in Peacebuilding Program/West African Network for Peacebuilding (WIPNET/WANEP). She also served as the commissioner-designate for the Liberia Truth and Reconciliation Commission. ■

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# African leaders must take a tough stance in UN climate change talks

By Chukwumerije Okereke

School of Human and Environmental Sciences, University of Reading, UK.



Progress is crucial at climate talks in Durban South Africa, later this year if measures to cut global emissions are to work. By the end of the talks, the international community should have laid the foundations of global, long-term action to combat climate change. African nations have an important role to play in these talks and must make their contributions, and strike bargains, to benefit their continent, the most vulnerable to the changes that rising temperatures and extremes of weather will bring.

The first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol ends in 2012 but countries have already started negotiating a new deal that will replace or build on Kyoto post-2012. Talks started after the Bali Conference in December 2007 when governments set up a group to oversee the preparation of the new agreement. The aim is develop an arrangement that will help the international community achieve deeper global emission reductions needed to stabilize the climate, while facilitating the sustainable development aspirations of billions of people across the world. It was widely, or perhaps naively expected that details of a legal basis for an effective and ambitious global cooperation on climate change will be hammered out in Copenhagen in 2009 but expectations were dashed when talks ended in acrimony and a stalemate.

The meeting in Cancun Mexico served to restore confidence in the process but most of the important issues were shifted to the forthcoming meeting in Durban South Africa. But then, it is important to be aware that the process of shaping the final form of the Durban agreement has already reached an advanced stage. Among the key events are the just concluded meetings of the UNFCCC subsidiary bodies – the subsidiary body on science and technology, the subsidiary body on implementation, the ad-hoc working group on long term co-operative action and the ad-hoc working group on the Kyoto Protocol. These meetings took place take place from June 6- 17 2011 in Bonn, Germany.

What is most evident from this meeting and a similar one before it that took place in Bangkok earlier this year, is that developed countries are determined to achieve three

objectives. First developed countries want to avoid taking more legal commitment to cut their emissions under the existing Kyoto Protocol. In order words, they want to abandon or kill the Kyoto Protocol. Second, developed countries want to draw developing countries into making legal commitments to cut their own emissions. At the moment their effort is concentrated on China and India but ultimately, they would want to see all developing countries including those in poor African countries take on legal obligations to reduce their emissions. Thirdly, developed countries want to avoid the responsibility of making huge financial transfers to developing countries to help in climate mitigation and adaptation. Critically, developed countries have already made good progress on all these objectives. The chances are therefore that they will likely achieve these objectives if Africans and other developing countries do not come out with a well developed and robust counter negotiation strategy between now and during the meeting in Durban.

For example, negotiation texts already include provisions for emission reduction commitments for developing countries, more communication and reporting on emission reduction initiatives and clauses that exempt developed countries from taking on legal commitments beyond 2012. At the same time very little progress has been made on important topics such as how to operationalise the Green Climate Fund, institutions and funding for adaptation, technology transfer and capacity building.

It is now relatively obvious that if African governments fail to monitor and contribute to these and other meetings between now and November, it could be too late to have any meaningful impact by the time the Durban meeting starts in December. And in attending these meetings, African countries must bear in mind at least four important points.

First, they should be aware that while climate change poses important threats to Africa, it also offers some unique opportunities to generate new revenues and build more diverse and resilient economies. For example, a policy like the CDM if designed to have an African focus could generate investments worth billions of US dollars every year. Having lost out completely in the Kyoto based CDM, Africa must insist on securing a specific percentage of the new Green Climate Fund.

The need to promote global justice and low carbon development in developing countries is at the heart of the existing CDM under the Kyoto Protocol so it is only fair that the rules are made to benefit the countries that most need assistance. The CDM is meant to encourage industrialized countries to fund low-carbon development projects in developing countries in return for emission reduction credits. But while the CDM has helped draw attention to the opportunities for cost-effective, private sector-led carbon reductions in developing countries, it has failed to bring about investments and economic development in the most vulnerable countries of the world. For example, Africa's current share of CDM projects is only 1.4 percent—53 out of 3,902 projects—or nine times smaller than its global share of greenhouse gas emissions.

Other than the CDM, there are also several initiatives that offer African countries the chance to attract investment and global payments for forest conservation, water management and the development of renewable sources of energy such as wind, solar, geothermal and biomass. Africa urgently needs these investments to adapt to climate change while continent-wide low carbon development is vital to meet African millennium development goals.

Second, governments must work closely and avoid internal wrangling to get the most out of these meetings. Although the needs of each of African country may vary, the only way the continent will make its voice heard is by adopting a common position and pressing hard on those issues that affect the whole continent – adaptation, CDM, capacity building and technology transfer. The group of Small Island States (AOSIS) has shown that countries with small resources can achieve a great deal when they act in unity and with a clear sense of purpose.

Third, African governments must avoid the temptation to recycle worn-out arguments for mercy and aid from developed countries. Instead, they must show some a solid commitment to low-carbon development and a clear sense of direction. Rather than viewing climate change only as a threat to their need for economic development, they should think hard about how to mainstream environmental concerns into their development initiatives and produce concrete proposals on the kinds of support they need to

implement to low-carbon development initiatives. The best way to influence on these negotiations will be to have clear positions on key issues while also showing a willingness to listen and make compromise without undermining the central objectives. The meeting of the African Heads of State in Ethiopia in 2009 to discuss climate change was a good move in formulating a common position for Africa. But this must be followed by more talks to give ministers and governments the chance to firm-up their positions and speak with a common voice in all the meetings between now and Durban.

And fourth, while it is important that African governments align their views with those of the G77/China, it is essential that this is not done blindly. The developed countries will be keen to ensure further differentiation within the G77. The North will be poised to see that a post 2012 climate regime recognizes the diversity of countries and economic circumstances within the G77 and in particular that some rapidly industrializing countries such as China, India and Brazil take on emission reduction targets. It is important that African countries adopt a pragmatic approach with respect to this issue. They must think carefully about the extent to which opposition to such proposals could diminish their chances of getting a good deal for Africa. President Jonathan Goodluck and whoever emerges the minister of Environment in the new cabinet have the opportunity to demonstrate continental level leadership by taking up informed positions, speaking out on these issues and mobilizing other African leaders to take action.

Overall, the best strategy will be to focus on putting forward constructive arguments for why the international community should give special consideration to the continent most vulnerable to climate change. ■

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Dr. Chukwumerije Okereke is a Reader in Environment and Development at the University of Reading. He is also the Director of Research in African Environment and Development at the School of Human and Environmental Sciences.

Article was first published in Nigerian Guardian Newspapers July 15, 2011 in the run up to the UNFCCC CoP 17 in Durban South Africa.



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# The Annual African Achievement Awards Scotland 2012



The Annual African Achievement Awards Scotland are the most rigorous and prestigious African awards in Scotland, allowing organisations/businesses, access to the African Community, markets and decision makers both in the U.K and in Africa. The award will be attended by over 400 businesses, professionals, all representative from the Commonwealth of Nations, several ambassadors who have impacted and made a difference to the African communities across the globe, be it in the public, private and voluntary sectors, including decision makers both in the UK and in Africa. This year, African Achievements Awards for Excellence will be held in the 5 Star Crown Plaza Hotel and Resorts in Glasgow on the 16th November 2012.

The Annual African Achievement Awards Scotland is a prestigious, unique, and pioneering platform that pays tribute to African success across all walks of life, placing emphasis on inspirational achievements and portraying inspirational role models in the areas of business, sport, entertainment and music, community work, philanthropy, education, leadership, arts and culture. It is designed to recognise and promote excellence, best practice, and innovation in the Worldwide African Community.

**Date and Venue of Award:** 16th November 2012, Crowne Plaza Hotels and Resorts, Glasgow G3 8QT. **Time:** 5.30pm.

## How to Nominate

The 2012 African Annual African Achievement Awards Scotland, organised by The African Forum Scotland is now open. To enter your nominations for the awards, visit our website on [www.awards.africanforumscotland.org](http://www.awards.africanforumscotland.org), and download and fill out our nomination form, scan and e-mail it back to [awards@africanforumscotland.org](mailto:awards@africanforumscotland.org). Alternatively to talk to one of our team directly, please call us on 0141 440 2700.

## Sponsorship

As a sponsor of The Annual African Achievement Award Scotland 2012, you will have the chance to be part of a high profile award event that recognise, celebrate and honour excellence and outstanding achievements within the African community here in U.K and Africa and thus support The African Forum Scotland's vision.

For the different sponsorship categories, please visit our website on [www.africanforumscotland.org](http://www.africanforumscotland.org), or call us on 0141 440 2700 to discuss sponsorship options.

## About African Forum Scotland



African Forum Scotland is a company limited by guarantee set up as a social enterprise with the objective of providing through its activities recognition for excellence for Africans in Scotland and in the diaspora, African organisations, businesses, and all African stakeholders and to provide a learning and best practice platform for African businesses to excel, equip and learn from one another.

At the African Forum Scotland, we strive to achieve our objective through our flagship Annual African Achievement Awards and the African Business Forum - two projects that is aimed at celebrating excellence and best practice and promoting the opportunity for exchange, knowledge sharing, business intelligence and collaborative excellence. The rich and diverse background of our board of directors and management committee is such that will drive our visions and organisation strategy.

## The Board of Directors



### Beltus Etchu Ojong

**FRSA, Accredited Assessor (EFQM) – Chief Executive Officer**

Beltus has responsibility of setting the strategic vision and direction of the organisation. Beltus has worked within Pollok Integration Network as chair and treasurer, Assistant

Volunteer Services Coordinator Scottish Refugee Council, Co-Founder and then treasurer of Scottish Refugee Policy Forum in Scotland, Director ASCEND Scotland, and President of the Association of English-Speaking Cameroonians in Scotland. Beltus presently work with CEMVO Scotland as the Quality Management Officer. Beltus has been involved in the



publication of several good practice guides for community groups and organisations in the UK, e.g. Understanding the stranger, Traditional Stories from Cameroon (ASSECS, 2009), Understanding Each Other (recommended as a model of good practice by Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education in 2007). He has a degree in Business Accounting with Distinction from Paisley University and was awarded the Court's Medal in December 2007 for all-round best student final year Business Accounting. He has also attained an MSc in International Finance Management from West of Scotland University. Beltus is an Accredited Assessor with the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) and is also a Fellow with the Royal Institute of Arts, Manufacture and Commerce (FRSA).



**Festus Olatunde**  
Executive Director,  
Finance and Operations

Is the branch pastor of the Mountain of Fire and Miracle Ministries International, Edinburgh. He is also currently a senior bank consultant in risk management and governance. He has prophetic anointing, and great zeal for evangelism, and was one of the founders of the Barclaycard Christian Fellowship in Northampton. His international experience as a professional banker and chartered accountant with more than 20 years has given him added advantage to reach out to the top executives of banks and organisations with the word of God. His motto is in Matt 6:33 "seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all other things shall be added unto thee". He is the initiator and program co-ordinator for War against Poverty an annual conference organise in conjunction with Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, Greatway Foundation, and University of Edinburgh. Pastor Festus is the co-ordinator of African Churches in Edinburgh and a member of Harvard School of Divinity Summer Leadership Program.



**Chimezie Umeh**  
Executive Director,  
Communications and  
Public Affairs

Chimezie is an experienced business and project consultant with over 12 years' experience working within the IT of financial institutions to the consulting firms, his experience spans through clients like Scottish Power, Scottish Water, Tesco Bank, Sumerian, NHS 24, NHS/ISD, University of

Dundee, Barclays Wealth, and a number of other off-shore projects. He currently works with the Business Consulting practice of CGI (Logica) and is a Director at Ultracriterion, a business support firm. Within the third sector organisations, Chimezie was the Chair of African and Caribbean Network Ltd Glasgow; Convenor, Scottish PanAfrican Initiative; Program Director, African Research and Policy Development Centre Glasgow (2011-Date); Director, Radio Kilimanjaro.

A graduate of Electronics Engineering from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka and an MSc in Operational Research from the Strathclyde Business School. He has a certificate in Social Entrepreneurship and Community Development from the Global Health University New Haven, Connecticut and an ILM Certificate in Leadership and Management from Strathclyde University Centre for Lifelong Learning. He is a certified Prince 2 Manager, ITIL Service Delivery, and a member of the Institute of Consulting UK, Operational Research Society, and International Institute of Business Analysis.



**Adeyemi Johnson**  
Executive Director,  
Programs, Events and  
Business

Mr Adeyemi Johnson is currently the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for Like2Care Limited in the United Kingdom and Rising Star in Sierra Leone. He is responsible for the strategic direction and delivering of both company's aims and objectives. As the President of Kingdom Africa Adeyemi's role is to provide leadership, empowerment, and direction to the African and Black community in Fife.

Over the years Adeyemi have provided training and management to community groups across Fife for the past 11years. Adeyemi has also worked to support youth projects across Fife and had the opportunity to co-ordinate European youth exchange and studies to countries such as Belgium, Poland and Slovakia.

He has also conducted research and consultations, some on policies and on proposed legislations such as Scotland Public Sector and Specific Duties under Equality Act 2010 that has come into effect 27th May 2012. He has shared responsibility for reviewing Fife's Council impact assessments in regard to Black Minority Ethnic communities. Adeyemi has extensive experience of developing partnership, good networking at both strategic and national level. ■

# Top 50 Influential Africans – the race is on!



The race is on! Nominations are already underway for the 15 Award categories for the Annual African Achievement Awards Scotland 2012. 15 of these will receive this very reputable Award during the Award Ceremony on 16th November 2012 at Crowne Plaza Hotels and Resorts Glasgow G3 8QT.

However the top 50 nominees will be coming out in our December Edition of the magazine! Go to [www.awards.africanforumscotland.org](http://www.awards.africanforumscotland.org) and make your nominations!!! All nominations close by 20th October 2012.

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# The Gains of Jonathan's Diplomacy

Written by Reuben Abati.



The gains of President Jonathan's diplomacy are often overshadowed by misrepresentations of the size of his delegation, ignorance about the value of his foreign travels, and the positives of his constant engagement with the international community. I have had cause on more than one occasion to expose the lie about published figures about the size of his delegations. I intend to deal here with what is overlooked.

Given the damage that the Nigerian interest suffered a few years ago, the same interest needed to be clarified and strengthened. We are living witnesses to that short, critical, phase in Nigeria's foreign relations when the country failed to show up at important international meetings, lost many positions in multilateral associations, forsook obligations, and found itself in a situation where many of our allies started wondering what had gone wrong with Nigeria. President Jonathan has brought the much-needed change in this arena, and has launched an operational framework for Nigerian diplomacy, which continues to strengthen the place of Nigeria in the world.

In 2010, as Acting President, he embarked on a number of diplomatic shuttles, as part of a deliberate attempt to reassure the world that Nigeria was well and secure despite the trauma

of succession that it had just experienced and the divisive politics of zoning that threatened to scuttle the country's political transition. Many may have forgotten, selective amnesia being a dangerous national malaise that President Jonathan's statesmanship, his humility, and the maturity that he displayed during that momentous season proved to be a strong stabilizing influence on a nervous Nigerian community. He had promised that Nigeria's next general elections to be conducted under his watch, in 2011, even with him as a contestant, will be free and fair, and that nobody's blood was worth being shed for him to win an election.

That promise was kept. The elections were not only free and fair, they were adjudged

the best ever in Nigeria's modern history. The achievement was not merely one of legitimacy; the applause from the international community was redemptive. Nigeria, at that point, almost a typical case study of the challenges of democratic consolidation, became yet another success story. President Jonathan has since taken many steps further to build on this.

One of the very early steps was a four-day, August 2011, seminar on Nigeria's Foreign Policy Process, with inputs from the Presidential Advisory Committee on Foreign Affairs led by Chief Emeka Anyaoku. The seminar and the foreign policy experts recommended, inter alia, a robust diplomacy, driven by Nigeria's economic interests. This accent on self-interest had shown up during the Obasanjo years. It reflected an increasing awareness that Nigeria's foreign policy should not be driven by the vain glory of being a certain brother's keeper, or the Father Christmas pretensions that dominated it for years, rather, hard-headed pragmatism. The world had changed a lot since Nigeria distributed its oil wealth to other countries and asked for nothing in return. The new strategy called for partnership, mutual respect, enhanced and innovative diplomacy, and constructive exchange. In this context, President Jonathan leads a foreign policy process that has been fruitful and meaningful, and properly linked to domestic policy.



His foreign travels fall into three categories: state visits (formal state to state activity), courtesy visits (attendance at ceremonies, burials, inaugurations) and working visits (trips to attend multilateral, bilateral and regional meetings). Each of these visits is official, the ultimate gainer is Nigeria, and it is well worth noting that since his assumption of office, President Jonathan has not gone on any unofficial or private trip abroad. It is a trite point that a strong foreign policy process, one which involves constant interaction and openness brings a country much goodwill, promotes understanding and strengthens the country's friendship with other countries. Closed countries are often treated with suspicion; their leaders are subjects of mystery. President Jonathan has worked very actively in the last two years to promote Brand Nigeria.

His foreign travels are usually, carefully chosen. He has equally played host to Heads of State and Governments and delegations from around the world including high profile visits by Britain's David Cameron, Germany's Angela Merkel, and US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton.

On all of these occasions, Nigeria's interest is strategically promoted. The President is accompanied on each of his trips by members of the National Assembly and Ministers who attend the relevant meetings and make necessary inputs for follow up action. Trade and investment always tops the agenda. The President personally leads the campaign of inviting investors to set up industries in Nigeria, and produce locally if they wish to take advantage of Nigeria's huge market potential. Interestingly, Nigeria's domestic security challenges have not proved to be a disincentive.

Foreign Direct Investment generated in the last year alone according to UNCTAD's 2012 Investment Report was \$8.9 billion making Nigeria No 1 in Africa and a top quartile investment destination in the world. During a recent trip to Rio, Brazil, Nigeria signed an MOU with Eletrobras to invest in the generation of 10, 000 MW; since then, there have been subsequent visits to Nigeria by Brazilian investors interested in infrastructure, food and beverages and consumer items. In October 2011, when President Jonathan met with the Australian investment community in Perth, on the sidelines of CHOGM, the Australia-Nigeria Trade and Investment Council (ANTIC) was established to facilitate the flow of investments into agriculture, mining and the petrochemicals sector. Australian Council members have since visited Nigeria, and there is an agreement in place to provide technical support for the local mining sector. In April 2012, the President, in the course of an official visit to Germany, got Siemens to commit to investment in power generation, and turbine maintenance and repair in Nigeria. Generally, there has been massive



support from governments and investors for the President's policies and strong interest to invest in the country.

The corollary to this is the search for opportunities for Nigerian investors in foreign markets. The President often times travels with Nigerian businessmen who are looking for in-roads into foreign markets: the Nigerian private sector is involved in banking and insurance in Rwanda and other parts of Africa (Access Bank, IGI, GTBank), in manufacturing in Ethiopia, and Southern Africa (the Dangote Group, LUBCON) and so on. Such investors often require the support of the Nigerian government, which has been readily and consistently provided by the Jonathan administration.

The class of Nigerians who have probably benefitted most or who stand to do so would be the Nigerians in Diaspora. Wherever President Jonathan goes in the world, he insists on the local embassy organizing a meeting with the Nigerians in the country. He likes to exchange views with them, find out how they are faring and even ask them to raise issues they may want him to take up with the host country. Such issues usually range from immigration to Nigerian issues, particularly absentee voting, and in one instance, request for the airlifting at Government expense of Nigerians who are willing to return to home, but cannot afford to do so.

President Jonathan never fails to acknowledge the importance of Nigerians abroad and the invaluable resource that they represent. To prove the point, many members of his government were sourced from the Diaspora. The Jonathan administration has always had cause to defend the interest of distressed Nigerians in diaspora in pursuit of citizen diplomacy, famously the evacuation of distressed Nigerians from Libya (more than 2,000 between March and November 2011) and Egypt (more than 1,000 in January 2012). It continues to engage with several development partners to ensure managed migration in the overall interests of all sides, including Nigerians. The fifth Nigeria/EU dialogue on Migration

and Development was held in Abuja in January 2012. Thus, the welfare of Nigerians in their relations with other countries has also been given the top most priority. Government has stood up to all countries in upholding the principle of reciprocity and by insisting that Nigerians be treated fairly.

Multilateral institutions usually have vacancies to be filled by nationals from all over the world. Even when the positions are rotated on a regional basis, the relevant countries still have to compete for such positions. It is not always an easy struggle as each country jostles for the positions with the highest possible visibility or influence. It requires sharp diplomacy to secure the support of other countries and to get the required number of votes for your candidate. When your country is not eligible for the post, you become one of the brides to be wooed to deliver the vote in favour of a particular country's candidate. It sounds like routine diplomacy, but it is high-wire politics. In the past one year, President Jonathan has devoted considerable energy to lobbying and campaigning for Nigerian candidates to get into positions in international organizations. The achievement in this regard has been remarkable: Dr. Bernard O. Aliu, President of the Executive Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) based in Montreal, Canada; Mrs. Theodora Oby Nwankwo, member, UN Committee on the Elimination of All forms Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); Dr. Aisha Laraba Abdullahi, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs.

After three unsuccessful attempts, Nigeria finally broke the electoral jinx at the AU for the first time in ten years. Mrs. Salamatul Sulaiman, Commissioner Political, Peace and Security at the ECOWAS Commission; Nigeria's election to the Executive Board of UNESCO for a term of four years in November 2011; Nigeria's election to the Governing Board of the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP); Nigeria was also elected to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on October 24, 2011; Election of Mr. Adamu Mohammed, a Deputy Commissioner of Police, as the Vice President of INTERPOL representing Africa at a meeting held in Hanoi, Vietnam in October, 2011; Re-election of the Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Hon. Mohammed Bello Adoke, SAN to the International Law Commission on November 17, 2011. The election of Dr. Chile Eboe-Osuji as one of the six judges of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in a tightly contested election in New York in November, 2011 and the election last year, of Nigeria as the first President of the Executive Board of the United Nations Entry for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (UN Women).

Our embassies abroad are also better organized. Ambassador Gbenga Ashiru, Jonathan's appointee as Minister of Foreign Affairs is a career diplomat who has been doing a good job of actualizing the new framework for Nigerian diplomacy. He is collegial in approach, and supportive of Mr.

President's vision. Career diplomats used to complain about their jobs being taken over and messed up by politicians. This year, President Jonathan handed over letters of commission to the country's new set of ambassadors, mostly career diplomats, and because he has thus encouraged the professionalization of the diplomatic service, career diplomats are no longer complaining. Many who have no foreign postings have achieved their career dreams as ambassadors-in-situ; our diplomats are reciprocating by showing higher levels of enthusiasm for the job. Nothing can be more damaging to a country's foreign policy process than a distracted professional foreign affairs cadre.

We have a leader who is respected by the international community. When TIME international magazine named President Jonathan one of the 100 Most Influential leaders of the world in 2012, a fitting acknowledgement of his achievements, and the only African leader to be so recognized, the warm citation was written by the Liberian President. Our President also holds one of the highest national honours in Liberia. In the last year, he has also been honoured by people, governments and institutions in Nigeria, Ghana, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago.

At the regional level, Nigeria's voice now rings loud and clear; its interventions are taken more seriously. President Jonathan served as ECOWAS Chairman for two years, and received great applause at the end of his tenure in February 2012. Under his watch, he led both Nigeria and ECOWAS to put an end to the threatened mayhem in Cote D'Ivoire when Laurent Gbagbo refused to hand over power, after the 2010 Presidential elections in that country. He helped to check a similar crisis of self-perpetuation in office in Niger, and has provided support for democratic efforts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Mali, Ghana and Guinea Bissau. He was one of the first African leaders to recognize the National Transitional Council of Libya and ask Muammar Gaddafi to quit. Since handing over as ECOWAS chair, President Jonathan has remained a respected voice among his brother Heads of State. At the moment, he is a co-mediator in the crisis in Mali. The relationship between Nigeria and other countries in the region, particularly Ghana, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Republic of Benin, Niger, Senegal and Liberia has never been stronger.

Commentators often insist that greater emphasis should be placed on domestic policy, not foreign policy. Our new framework links both strategically. The investments that are flowing into Nigeria create jobs, deepen competition within the market, push the drive for necessary infrastructure further, and on all fronts, Brand Nigeria is strengthened. ■

**Dr. Abati is Special Adviser (Media and Publicity) to President Jonathan Goodluck.**

# A time for African SOX

Reaping the gains of Sarbanes Oxley (SOX) and compliance in the finance industry.

By Festus Ogunmola Olatunde.

There is usually the initial cynicism over compliance with new regulations. Some may see it as costly, time consuming, disruptive especially if it will involve tampering with the IT systems, business and financial processes. The world has witnessed high profile corporate collapses including Enron and WorldCom and this has led to the introduction of more compliance laws.

The Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 was introduced to help restore investor confidence in company financial reporting. Section 404(a) of the Act (S404), and the Securities and Exchange Commission's (SEC) related implementation rules, require the company's management to assess the effectiveness of their internal control over financial reporting, as at the end of company's most recent fiscal year. S404 also requires management to include this assessment in the company's 20-f report. The company's external auditor is required to attest and report on management's assessment. Management are required to file the auditor's attestation report as part of the annual report which therefore makes S404 the most onerous point of the Act for Banks and Companies. It requires substantial work to be undertaken across all business areas to implement, test and evaluate the effectiveness of their internal control over financial reporting.

The Japanese has also introduced the JSOX based on the original framework of Sarbanes Oxley.

The SEC has identified COSO framework (Committee of Sponsoring Organisation) as the most recognised international Standard for integrated framework of control. Coso has been chosen by many Groups of companies to support compliance

with the Act alongside a number of other Business initiatives. It sets out the five pillars for effective control, all of which must be in place for a control to be effective:

- Control Environment
- Risk Assessment
- Control Activities
- Information and Communication
- Monitoring

Organisations that proactively implemented S404 have realised the gains despite the initial cynicism. Companies that are compliant are now appreciating the robustness created in their processes through the SOX implementation, regular testing and remediation of Control Gaps.

For example, a company after many years realised during SOX implementation and testing that automated business control on interest calculation in its financial application has not been working correctly. This situation was detected many years after the implementation of the financial application and has to be rectified to meet the SOX requirements.

Another issue that SOX resolved were some outdated policy documents where original owners have left the company. The documents were kept in the archive and not updated to reflect the current financial controls and change situations. Some of these gaps were highlighted and corrected during SOX implementations. It also took many people a long time to appreciate how a simple loss of IT connectivity can lead to a long lasting control gap if regular testing and compliance is not undertaken. This is one of the problems SOX is meant to detect before it deteriorates.



**Festus Olatunde is a Chartered Accountant, IT expert, Auditor and a Business Continuity Practitioner. A top ten MBA graduate from University of Manchester Business School. He specialises in Risk Management, Compliance and Governance. He has recently implemented Sarbanes-Oxley (A new regulation for banks and companies enlisted in American Stock Exchange). He was an Implementation Specialist for a major multi national company covering Europe, Middle-East and Africa. He is currently among the top rated SOX, Risk and Compliance experts in Europe.**



A new survey conducted by the Institute of Management (IM) revealed that many Company Directors seem to be displaying a James Bond “daring-do” approach to risk that may lead to their organisation failures and sabotage. They remain dangerously complacent about SOX, Governance and Risk Management.

The first thing to remember is that it is not OK not to take a decision. The first thing is to assess what would enhance good decision. One of the things to consider is the requirement that will make a positive impact on: Profit recognition, Customer Satisfaction, Operational stability, Image/Reputation, Compliance, Staff welfare and Satisfaction. SOX were meant to impact on the financial reporting positively but a good SOX implementation can also impact positively on the above requirements.

Sarbanes-Oxley implementation will enhance more robust controls in many key areas of the business for instance on Infrastructure Support, New Systems Implementation, IT Security, IT System Upgrades and Changes, Data Back-up, Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity Management.

SOX have also proved to help build robust controls around the following: Business Growth Initiatives, Compliance with regulations, Control environments in new business areas, Inventory Management, Quality of Accounts Reconciliations, Inter-company Activities, Revenue Recognition, Indirect Expenditure Process Changes, Compliance with Corporate Policies, Fixed Asset Management, Pension Process, Asset Physical Security, Warranty Process, Tax Process, and New Product Development.

Some people may argue that they have good Internal Audit Department in place that will ensure control lapses are reported not realising S404 has taken things beyond that level. The overriding aim is to embed compliance needs in day-to-day activities. However, active oversight will still be required to ensure that consistency of approach is maintained around the organisation and that the approach is sensitive to changes over time in processes and the financial reporting risk profile. Internal Audit team has a key role to play although the extent of their involvement should be limited to providing assurance on the governance, risk management and internal control processes.

In conclusion, compliance with S404 should be run by management and this responsibility should not be delegated to external or internal auditors alone if SOX benefits are to be reaped. The next step along the continuum is to study the implementation, understand the key risks and mitigating controls. The final step is to ensure constant testing of the controls in line with the SOX requirements and keep remediation plans up to date.

Please watch out for the cost effective implementation process of SOX in our future publication. ■

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## WELCOME

Ahmad and Nabi McMullan is a firm of accountants and tax advisors based in Glasgow and Edinburgh. We are leading financial professionals providing a range of business support services to a wide range of clients all over Scotland.

Many small to medium sized businesses in Scotland have entrusted Ahmad and Nabi McMullan's knowledgeable partners and staff with their business development needs. At Ahmad and Nabi McMullan, we provide a cost-effective, high value solution to meet all of your financial needs. We work hard to get to know you in order to deliver timely, individual advice on how to improve your business and personal wealth.

## COMPANY PROFILE

Ahmad and Nabi McMullan was set up in 1976 by Gjulam Nabi and Shaun McMullan. Mumtaz Ahmad, who is a fellow of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (FCMA), became a partner in 1985 after working in the firm for three years. Our latest addition is Omar Nabi who joined in 2009 after working for WDM Chartered Accountants for 5 years after completing his Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) qualification in 2007. As well as general accountancy, audit and tax skills, our partners also have individual specialist skills that enable us to provide clients with a first class service as and when required. With our wealth of experience, we pride ourselves on delivering an unparalleled service to all clients, whatever their size or sector.

## OUR APPROACH

Ahmad and Nabi McMullan continues to provide essential support to clients in response to the current and ever evolving economic climate. Accountancy and taxation matters today are fast moving and complex. We thus recognise that individuals, whether they are business owners or personal clients, need professional support. Our clients are given a service that is accessible and responsive, providing support when required.

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# Background on the Scotland Malawi Partnership



The Scotland Malawi Partnership (SMP) is an umbrella organisation which exists to inspire the people and organisations of Scotland to be involved with Malawi in an informed, coordinated and effective way to the benefit of both nations.

The Partnership provides a forum where ideas, activities and information can be shared on its website, through its online mapping tool and its regular workshops, training events and stakeholder meetings. It also publishes good practice guides to harness the expertise of its members on key issues such as school partnerships, volunteering in Malawi and shipping goods to Malawi. By creating a single space for all the organisations and individuals in Scotland currently engaged with Malawi to come together, the SMP helps reduce duplication of effort, adds value to Scotland's historic civil society relationship with Malawi, and contributes towards poverty alleviation in Malawi.

The Partnership has over 450 member organisations and individuals, all of whom have their own Malawi work/connections. The SMP member database and mapping tool are both available online at: [www.scotland-malawipartnership.org/members.html](http://www.scotland-malawipartnership.org/members.html). In addition to its formal membership the Partnership also engages around 150 key Malawians in Scotland and about 250 Malawian organisations and individuals with Scottish links in Malawi. They also facilitate a Cross Party Group on Malawi in the Scottish Parliament, work closely with (and are kindly core-funded by) the Scottish Government, and are starting to work with all 32 Scottish Local Authorities.

In November 2010 the University of Edinburgh published its report 'Valuing Scotland's links with Malawi', which found that:

- The value of inputs (money, time and in-kind donations) made by the membership of the SMP to Scotland's links with Malawi is at least £30 million, over the twelve months previous to October 2010.

- At least 1.3 million Malawians (roughly 10% of the total population) and 280,000 Scots have benefitted from these activities over the same period.
- Approximately 148,000 Malawians and 85,000 Scots were actively involved in delivering these activities

The SMP is underpinned by a historic bilateral civil society relationship based not on 'donors' and 'recipients' but on long-standing, mutually-beneficial community to community, family to family and people to people links. It is a relationship built on trust and mutual respect. This is a new and innovative mode of international development and it is a powerful force for change.

Given the strong community buy-in at both ends of the partnership, this is a model which offers exceptional value for money: the benefits of the SMP's modest inputs have been multiplied many times over, and have trickled down through Scottish and Malawian civil society to bring about real change at a fraction of the cost of conventional 'big aid'. ■

[www.scotland-malawipartnership.org](http://www.scotland-malawipartnership.org)  
**Address:** Room 3/7, City Chambers, City of Edinburgh Council, High Street, Edinburgh, EH1 1YJ  
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# The future is bright for Nigeria

With a star Governor like  
Alhaji Ibrahim Hassan  
Dankwambo Fca, Fcib, Talban.



*Alhaji Ibrahim Hassan Dankwambo  
FCA, FCIB, OON, Talban Gombe*

On the 29th May 2011, a new vision, a new hope, a new era of unprecedented leadership hinged on intellectual capability, purposeful planning, humane disposition to attend to the yearnings of the people and a strong desire to institute good governance was birthed. His Excellency the Governor of Gombe State, Alhaji Ibrahim Hassan Dankwambo FCA OON Talban Gombe epitomises a leader with an amiable, unassuming, humane, intelligent, humble but firm gentleman with strong character. Governor Dankwambo in his previous career before becoming governor had demonstrated great leadership prowess in handling his duties as the Accountant General of Gombe State and later was elevated to the enviable position of the Accountant General of the Federation, where his achievements can best be described as revolutionary. It is the laudable achievements at his previous assignment that endeared him to the people of Gombe state who decided to vote for him massively. Out of the total valid votes cast, he scored 596,481 while the candidate second to him scored only 91,781.

In order to effectively articulate the programmes of his administration, Governor Dankwambo, upon assumption of office inaugurated eleven sector based fact finding committees with an overriding mandate to evaluate the various socio economic sectors of the state with a view to bringing up a comprehensive base line assessment of problems and needs of the people which would form the platform for a systematic development of the state in the short, medium and long term. The various recommendations made by the committees which were later harmonised into one document became the action plan of the government. The government then embarked on the implementation of the action plan.

## Education

Before the administration of governor Dankwambo, the Educational sector was in a comatose position. Very startling revelations were made by one of the eleven sectors based committees saddled with the assessment of the Educational sector. It was found that out of 18,000 candidates that wrote

the West African School certificate in 2010, only 18 candidates got five credits and above including English and Mathematics, which translates to 0.1%. This ugly outcome was due to the fundamental decay underlying the system that prepared these students for the examinations. For example, the following statistics came to light during the presentation of the report of the educational sector.

- i. Due to inadequate learning environment such as classrooms, it was found that a typical class room that is supposed to contain 40 students had up to 180 students in a class;
- ii. The congestion of students in a class was due largely to inadequate classrooms;
- iii. There was very acute shortage of teachers such that the ratio of teacher per students in core subjects like English and Mathematics was 1 Teacher to 727 students and 1 Teacher to 2590 students respectively;
- iv. Most of the teachers were not qualified to teach, thus producing students that are either not baked or half baked;

In order to respond to these daunting challenges, governor Dankwambo immediately declared an emergency in the educational sector with massive infrastructural development. The target was to urgently reverse the ugly trend he found on ground. He declared that the number of students in a class must not be more than 45 and maximum of 1,500 students in any standard secondary school. This led him to embark on the massive construction and renovation of classrooms, Hostels, Laboratories, Staff quarters and external works throughout the state. The following has been done so far to address the problem:

- i. **Infrastructure** – As at the last count, the number of classrooms being construction/renovated is put at 582 spread across the state in both Primary and Secondary Schools. Also, there are 51 laboratories built along with the classrooms;
- ii. **Recruitment of Teachers** – In order to make up for the acute shortage of teachers 1000 Degree graduates in

different discipline are being employed to teach in the secondary schools while another 1000 NCE holders are being employed to teach in the primary schools. The recruitment exercise of the first one thousand is almost completed;

- iii. **Furnishing** – To equip the schools being built, governor Dankwambo has awarded a contract for the purchase of 4,000 (three in one) desk for the secondary schools, 1,410 (three in one) desk for Secondary Schools, 2,590 double Decker beds and 636 tables and chairs for principals vice principals and teachers;

Many political observers who took their time to go round the projects declared that the feat achieved by the Dankwambo administration was unprecedented and unparalleled. What he has achieved within one year in the educational sector could not be achieved by many governors in eight years of being on the saddle.

## Gombe State Road Network

- i. **Regional Road** – Gombe state being predominately an agrarian state has great potential for Agro Allied Industries. Governor Dankwambo realised early, that in order to boost the economy of the state, the rural communities where the bulk of the agricultural produce are cultivated must be linked to the urban area in order to fully harness the potential of the state. To this end, he immediately identified communities that are rich in agricultural produce, but are cut off from urban areas due to lack of road network and awarded contracts for the construction of roads to such communities. In the first phase of this effort, five rural-urban roads were awarded to link the communities to the urban areas. Some of the rural dwellers were full of gratitude with tears streaming down their cheeks. According to them, they never thought in their life time that they would see the kind of development that has come to them. Places that were hitherto either not accessible or take hours to reach can now be accessed within minutes. This will in the long run boost the economic activities of the state;
- ii. **Gombe Township Roads** – In Gombe metropolis, Governor Dankwambo embarked on the construction of 31 township roads of 33.376Km, with 40mm asphaltic concrete wearing surface and concrete line drains. Out of this 15.97 have been completed while others are ongoing. This feat is also regarded as unprecedented in the history of Gombe State;
- iii. **Township Roads in other towns within the state** – The revolution of the road constructions continued with the extension of township roads to Billiri Kaltungo, Dukku, Bajoga Bambam and cham with 40mm asphaltic concrete wearing surface and concrete line drains totaling 20km in all these towns;
- iv. **Interstate Road** – Only recently, Dankwambo awarded a 54 Km road linking Gombe – Kanawa and other communities along the road. This is the longest road construction embarked upon by governor Dankwambo;

In all, over 50 roads of 283.73 km at a total cost of N 33.73 billion are currently under construction with most of them completed and some at advance stages of completion.

## Water Resources and Environment

**Water reticulation** – Realising the crucial nature of water to people, governor Dankwambo systematically set out to address in a more holistic manner the perennial water problem of the State. After assessing the water need of the state, he designed a water system that will outlive generations yet unborn taking into consideration population explosion and future development of the state. Accordingly, a contract of N4.3 billion was awarded to carry out a comprehensive reticulation and rehabilitation of the entire Gombe Township and its environs. The reticulation is extended to nearby communities such as kwami, Gadani and Bojude all in Kwami Local Government area of the state. In addition, other regional water schemes to serve the three senatorial zones of the state have been articulated and some have been started. For example, the government has embarked on the second regional water scheme for Gombe South Senatorial District from Balanga Dam. The by products of the scheme when completed would be the generation of electricity to Shongom Kaltungo, billiri and Akko local government areas of the state.

**Erosion Control** – In the area of erosion control, Gombe town is situated in a valley and therefore has the perennial problem of flooding. It is on record that some of the worst flooding in Nigeria happened in Gombe state. In order to address this menace, the government embarked on drainage projects to protect lives and property. Accordingly, the following erosion control projects have been embarked upon with most of them completed.

- i. Shongo housing estate to CBN
- ii. Pantami market to pantami doma
- iii. Shamaki tudun Wada to Rail line

## Youth Empowerment

Governor Dankwambo on assumption of Office declared the activities of the Kalare boys criminal and called on all Kalare members to lay down their arms. It will be recall that Kalare was a militant group that reigned terror in Gombe, molesting innocent citizens with dangerous weapons at no provocation. It was widely known that the fear of Kalare is the beginning of wisdom. People in Gombe were always living in fear as the Kalare members could attack anyone, anywhere and at anytime. With the coming of Dankwambo administration, that has become history. People now go about their normal businesses without fear of harassment intimidation or being killed. In place of the Kalare, Dankwambo has embarked on series of Youth rehabilitation training and empowerment programmes. Various programmes were churned out targeted at rehabilitating the Kalare boys, training and empowerment of the youths of the state in general. Within the short time of Governor administration, the following which are targeted at

the youths have been enunciated. Some have been fully implemented others are ongoing while others are yet to commence

- i. The government has planned to train 30,000 youths throughout the State. The pilot scheme which involves the training of 300 youths in various vocational and skills acquisition training have been fully executed. The gradaunts were given free tools and interest free loans of N200,000 each to start their own businesses;
- ii. Another set of youths numbering 1198 were trained under the Talba Youth re-orientation and rehabilitation. Out of this number five hundred (500) were trained as environmental agents, Five hundred (500) as Ward Security Agents and 198 as traffic agents. They have since been posted to their various duty posts and are working;
- iii. Under the second phase of the training in vocational skills acquisition, 500 youth are currently undergoing training in thirteen (13) different skills. Equipments worth N229 million have been supplied for their training;
- iv. Another youth empowerment is the training of 100 youth in renewable energy technology;
- v. Yet another 300 hundred youths were trained at Jos in leadership and citizenship training;
- vi. The Government has procured 250 tricycles in furtherance of the empowerment of the youth;

From the forgoing, the government has conscientiously embarked on transforming the youth of the state and rechanneled their energy (which was hitherto abused) to more useful and gainful employment. This in the long run will ensure peaceful environment for meaningful economic development to take place.

## Agriculture

The State being an agrarian state has the potential for the development of agro allied industries. Realizing this potential, the Dankwambo administration very early in the life of the administration devised a means of encouraging the farmers to increase their yield. For example, one of the first contracts he awarded was the purchase of 35 numbers of tractors and refurbishing of 25 old ones. These have since been distributed throughout the state for hiring by farmers. In addition, farm inputs have been procured on time. In particular a new system of sales of fertilizer was adopted to ensure that the fertilizers reach the farmers that actually need them in good time.

## Bank of Industries

One of the Challenges Governor Dankwambo had to contend with was how to ensure that there is value addition in the farm produce produced by the state. It was noted that most of the farm produce are sold raw and at a very ridiculous prices. This products are then shipped to other states where they are further processed into other useful products thereby creating employment for citizens of other states. In order to arrest this trend, Dankwambo decided to partner with the Bank of

industries to pull out N1billion and make it available to the people of Gombe state. It was made available for people and businesses to access cheap loans in order to set up small scale agro allied industries, thereby empowering the people through the value chain activities that would take place and creating employment opportunities for the citizen. To this end, the Gombe state Government and the Bank of Industries contributed the sum of N250million each in the first instance making a total of N500million, with a balance of N250million each to be made available after the initial N500million have been exhausted. It is to be noted that many individuals and companies have benefited from the funds and the multiplier effect will soon manifest. Other giant strides by the government include:

- i. Procurement of 34 thousand tones of fertilizers and distributed in the 2012 farming season;
- ii. The State carried out Animal vaccination for various diseases with a view to eradicating them in the state;
- iii. Re-activation of Gombe Poultry Production unit which was abandoned. The unit is in full operation now;
- iv. Training of over 150 youths in modern agriculture at the Gombe State/Leventis Foundation Agric Institute Located at tumu in Akko Local Government Area of the State on a continuous basis;
- v. To minimize conflict between farmers and cattle rearers which often lead to lose of lives, the administration embarked on re-demarcation of major stock routes in the state. The government appointed stock route overseers in all the eleven local governments and provided them with motor cycles for effective routine supervisions.

## Health

In the Health Sector, the Government, based on its action plan which is a product of the eleven sector based committees has addressed the following in order to boost the health service delivery of the state:

- i. There were been agitations by the health workers for the implementation of HATSS and CONSTSS Salary scale which could not be implemented by previous administrations. Upon assumption of Office the Dankwambo immediately approved the implementation of the salary schemes. With the settlement of this contentious issues, all was set for other developmental projects to commence;
- ii. Creation of the Gombe State Primary Health Centres Development Agencies;
- iii. Renovation and upgrading of the Preventive Health Office in Gombe Metropolis;
- iv. Embarked on the construction of fourteen (14) Model Primary Health Centres across the state;
- v. Construction of snake bite treatment centre at the General Hospital Kaltungo;



- vi. Embarked on the upgrading of the urban maternity Gombe into Special Hospital for women and children;
- vii. Construction of an intensive care unit, Extension of maternity ward, new laundry and new kitchen at the State specialist Hospital;
- viii. Provision of free drugs to children and women in all the state hospitals;
- ix. Construction of a model school of Nursing and Midwifery for the training of nurses and midwifery personnel;

### Rural Development

- i. On Rural Development, the Governor commissioned the electrification of Barunde east electrification project awarded by the Government;
- ii. Early in the administration, the Government purchased 50 transformers of various capacities and distributed them throughout the state to boost power distribution;
- iii. Another set of 55 transformers have been ordered by the government to be distributed across communities in the state'
- iv. Also, arrangement has been concluded for the electrification of Feshinyo, shuwari, Gari Zambuk and dumbe villages.

### Accountability

Governor, Dankwambo has brought to bear on the style of governance the tenets of accountability probity and transparency using his rich experience as a Professional Accountant, Economist, Professional Banker and an administrator per excellence. This is evident in the prudent management of the meagre resources the state receives from the Federation Account. It is on record that the state receives one of the lowest allocations among the 36 states of the Federation, second only to Ekiti state and averaging only about N3billion monthly. Instead of sitting down and complaining for the lack of resources, Dankwambo stated at a

certain forum that the state has enough resources to develop the state, meaning that with prudent management a lot could be achieved with meagre resources. It is therefore; out of these meagre resources that the state is able carry out all the myriad of projects that have been highlighted above after paying the monthly salaries, statutory transfers and repayment of loans inherited.

### Due Process

Governor Dankwambo has enshrined due process in the award of contracts in the state. He has allowed all the agencies that ensure accountability to function without interference. Thus, contracts are awarded only after they have satisfied the requirement of due process provisions.

### Project Monitoring and evaluation

In order to ensure that the project being executed are of standard and stand the test of time, Dankwambo set up an independent project monitoring and evaluation team made up of professionals from different fields outside the main stream of the public service. The team is empowered to monitor and evaluate the quality of all projects without exception and report its findings directly to the Governor. This is a further confirmation of his transparency stance on governance. It is a common knowledge that ever since the team started its work, there has been consciousness on the part of the ministries departments and agencies as well as contractors to carry out the execution of projects with due observance of quality.

In conclusion, Since came into power, the Governor of Gombe State has not let down his electorates. His manifestoes during his political campaign are being met one by one.

Africa and the world in general is looking forward to seeing him becoming another hero and emancipator. ■

From The European Observer Desk.



# Finally, the Final Word!

By John Igoli (igolij@yahoo.com)



*Dr. John O. Igoli is a Research Fellow, University of Strathclyde Glasgow UK. Conducting research and teaching in natural products chemistry for over 20 years. Major research interest: Phytochemical studies of Nigerian plants for anticancer, anti-trypanosomal, anti-parasitic and anti-microbial activities. Isolation of over 100 known and over ten novel compounds from various medicinal plants. He graduated from the University of Nigeria Nsukka in 1985 and is a lecturer at the University of Agriculture Makurdi 1987-Date. Married with three children. John is a public affairs commentator and has published a collection of short stories-Mjawari and other stories, and a collection of poems-Benzene and other poems. He has been a contributing author for the Nigerian Village Square since 2007 and has published over 50 articles.*

This is the verdict regarding Nigeria in the just released list of most corrupt countries by Transparency International.

***Africa's two largest oil producers, Nigeria and Angola, are still mired among the nations seen as the world's most corrupt, ranking 143rd and 168th – little changed from past showings.***

What more can be added to this summary? Those who are mocking us that things have changed in Nigeria should respond to this. When Prof Chinua Achebe said nothing has changed, the government said he was misinformed! One of the first clichés I learnt in Physics is the term 'No work is done if the displacement is zero'. The displacement we look for here is a positive one for the people and not economic graphs and budgetary projections or provisions.

Nigerians have not left where they were in 1999. Begging has become the order of the day. People beg for political positions, jobs, to pass examinations and for government and our leaders to carry out promised projects and programmes. We even beg sit tight leaders and non-performing ones to remain in power. We beg for our salaries and for our corrupt leaders not to be punished or removed while at the same time begging for justice in other areas. While we cry against general injustice, our courts dole out selective justice.

Economic begging has developed from hand held bowls to hand held phones. The fact still remains that people are begging to eat, transport or to meet bills and fees. Before 1999 beggars may have worn ragged or torn clothes, today's beggars are in

suits and appear very fashionable. Then beggars accepted N20 or less, today's beggars will not thank you for N20,000.00 gift. Then people begged to eat, today people beg to recharge their phones and feed their blackberries.

So much effort, so much willingness, so much good will, so much commitment, so much sacrifices, so much opportunities yet it has all been motion without movement, fire without power, water without wetness, words at odds and rulers whose length of service or contribution to national development cannot be measured.

Today we are being invited to patronise and enjoy home made products yet the key to industrial development-food is lacking in Nigeria. A hungry man is an angry man the popular saying goes. Nigerians are angry with the situation on ground, their politicians, schools, salaries, power supply, exchange rate of the naira and the corruption perceivable in the public sector. To cap it all the only subsidy on their anger is about to be removed!

Rather than expend energy rejecting the report or claiming that Nigeria was not properly assessed or all indices of the fight against corruption in Nigeria were not taken into consideration we should take a cue from countries that have battled corruption to a standstill and have risen in ranks in the corruption index. Catching big fishes only to go for a swim with them and then let them go with thank you bargain is not sufficient to serve as a deterrent to others. Convicted persons should be punished and should be seen to have been punished.

The global demand for accountability and the speed at which information is being exchanged can no longer be ignored. This is no time to tell the people that what you have heard, read or seen is not true. It is now more profitable and prudent to investigate and let the truth be exposed. The tentacles of corruption snares everyone in and leaves no room for people oriented programmes and policies.

This submission by TI must serve as a catalyst for our fight against corrupt practices, poverty and developing a truly visible change in the life of Nigerians. To respond to it in any other way is to attempt to run from our present shadow. We welcome on board the new helmsman at EFCC. His work has certainly been cut out. The government through his actions and the EFCC must tell the world that it is no longer business as usual in Nigeria. ■

# Chief Henry Njalla Quan, Nation Builder



Chief Henry Njalla Quan is the general manager of Cameroon Development Corporation. The Cameroon Development Corporation is an Agro-Industrial complex that grows, processes, and markets tropical export and crops. It operates in Cameroon in the Central African sub-region.

It is a parastatal company and its operations management is directed by a general manager and governed by a board of directors also headed by a chairman.

Currently, its plantations cover a total of approximately 41,000 hectares of land, 38,000 hectares of which is mature and at a productive stage. The corporation constitutes a workforce of over 15,700 employees, including temporal workers, making it the second employer after the state of Cameroon. Its major products include banana, semi-finished rubber, palm oil and palm kernel.

Since taking over as general manager in 2009, the corporation has undergone, through his leadership, a complete cycle of metamorphosis in terms of upgrading manpower, ameliorating

living conditions of workers, remuneration and of course breaking new grounds. Through his leadership, the quest to promote innovation and growth of the corporation, lead to the realisation of initiatives such as BOA Plain Oil development project, the Matouke Rubber and Tiko plain banana extension project, all of which addresses the issues of climate change for its carbon orchestration vast development programme, poverty alleviation orientation and the proficiency in management projects as well.

Chief Njalla Quan demystified the link between workers, management and communities ever since he took over the management of CDC. He simplified management and instilled transparency. The fact that workers salaries are paid on time record, building of rest houses, installing heavy duty generators and paying all damages to the population of Boa plain last year, was a mark of greatness that has caught every Cameroonian, both at home and abroad. ■

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# Dr. Samura Kamara

Sierra Leone Minister of Finance  
and Economic Development.



Dr. Samura Kamara, Minister of Finance, was born in the village of Kamalo, Bombali District in the Northern Province of Sierra Leone on December 15, 1963. Dr. Samura work as an executive for the International Monetary Fund in Washington, D.C. Dr. Samura gave up his job from the diaspora to help generate Sierra Leone economic development.

Over the years Dr. Samura has been promoted from Bank of Sierra Leone Governor to Minister of Finance & Economic Development. Over the years he has stabilized the country's economy and working towards growth.

In his position as Minister of Finance & Economic Development he has been supported and worked in partnership with China, United Kingdom and European Union.

In a statement Dr. Samura points out that Sierra Leone has received strong support from both international funding organisations and bilateral donors, reflecting global confidence in the country's future. He explains that the government has devised a development strategy based on four main pillars: infrastructure, agriculture, human development (healthcare and education), and energy.

Dr Samura is working towards advancing the use of solar technology and hydropower in Sierra Leone, rebuilding and modernising Sierra Leone's economy and has introduced value added tax to support sustainable economic growth.

Dr Samura has also introduced incentives, including tax breaks, to encourage private investment.

## Attracting More European Investment

The Minister of Finance would like to make European investors more aware of Sierra Leone's potential. While the country's mining sector has attracted major European investment, other sectors have lagged behind. He says, "Sierra Leone has received investment from the Middle East, China and other non-European countries, but we want to focus on attracting more European investors, especially because our ties with Europe have traditionally been strong. We have so many natural resources and so much potential here in Sierra Leone. European investors need to come here and see this for themselves."

Concerning corruption, Dr. Samura Kamara is also working to eradicate and control corruption in the public and private sectors, including among investors. He concludes, "It takes time to change Sierra Leone's image, but if we continue the way we are going now, we will succeed. As our President points out, we are running this country like a business. We have strong leadership and a great agenda for change, and we are progressing very quickly." ■

## The Calabash Restaurant

Welcome to The Calabash Restaurant. Located in the center of Glasgow City shopping and business district, The Calabash Restaurant serves up fine foods with exciting dishes in a unique ambiance. At the Calabash Restaurant, every dish is created using only the freshest, finest fair trade ingredients. We serve only the choicest meats and seafood, freshest side dishes, and fresh baked bread. Our authentic menu and atmosphere create a truly enjoyable dining experience.

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# A "Retired Army General"

His synopsis with a classical difference.

A successful Elder Statesman and a man of the people that helps others in time of need and in deed. He is the current chairman of Arewa Consultative Forum, a well established and formidable group that aims to provide leadership steers and support on matters that will move the nation forward. He has a mission to create hope for all, poor or working class that cuts across all tribes in Nigeria. He radiates and facilitates happiness towards all who came his way from different walks of life. An Army General whose retirement has not made him tired of reaching out to meeting the needs of common people. He fought to protect his country at war but now feeds hungry people with food to protect them from dying of starvation.

His major purpose in life is clear and sure. He has made a great difference in the life of many households. He believes in community development and thereby implemented many projects to make life comfortable for the common people. Many of these projects have become sources of employment and help in reducing poverty level for families.



*Lt Gen Jeremiah Useni*

This Army General is another Hero of our modern age that should not go unrecognised.

## **The following are highlights of the community projects just to mention but a few:**

- Construction of road projects in Langtang, Plateau State.
- Bore holes in Tilam, Sabon Layi Lohmak.
- Clinic in Tilam
- Local Dam in Wase
- Electricity in Langtang town, Gani, Bwarat, and Bapkwai
- Useni Memorial College in Dadur Bwarat
- Construction of Dam in Langtang
- Road construction in rural areas of Langtang
- Julie Useni Memorial Hospital
- Daughters of Abraham in Abuja
- Support for eradicating poisonous snake bite in Tarok land
- Langtang Local stadium launch and development
- Training and support of young stars in Tarok for music and commercial business. ■

Please visit the website below to read more about his profile and how to support and expand the projects:  
[www.useni.org](http://www.useni.org) Email: [info@useni.org](mailto:info@useni.org)

From the secret observer. 6th September 2012

# Mjawari (Part 1)

This is an excerpt from Mjawari,  
a collection of short stories written  
by John Igoli.

“Benue? Impossible!”

“What do you mean by impossible?” Kunle’s mother asked.

“My son cannot serve in Benue State, period!”

“What is wrong with the state?”

“Listen, Iyakunle, Youth service is no longer for the fun of it. It is a year a graduate uses to fine tune his aspirations and look for a job. There are no job opportunities in Benue State. There are no industries, no federal presence and Kunle is not an indigene to work in their civil service”

“But you served in Kaduna State

“Oh yes! That was long ago when NYSC was NYSC; in fact, Kaduna was so full of opportunities. I got five jobs after my NYSC and I had to choose. You can see I made the right choice with this company that has prospered us well”.

“Kunle can still find such an opportunity there”.

“No way; I don’t see why you are arguing. Do you want our son to waste one year of his life doing nothing in the guise of NYSC?”

“He will be serving the nation. That is patriotism”.

“Iyakunle”, papa Kunle laughed. “Patriotism” he repeated the word like connoisseur tasting a wine he could not easily place.

“Look, I once believed in Nigeria and what has that belief got me? Frustration and nothing else as nothing works in Nigeria. Those shouting patriotism only want others to lay down their lives for the country. Ask them to forgo an inch of their comfort and they say that is unpatriotic but they can request others to forgo their salaries, basic comfort and even rights. Nobody should preach to me about Nigeria going to be the same again. Age we know is one thing that goes up and never comes down. Nigeria is ageing; it can never go back to its youth again.”

Kunle was listening to all these without uttering a word. In fact, he was not even thinking. Their words were his thoughts spoken aloud. He just waited for the discussion to end.

“Papa Kunle, please let him go to Benue, after all he is not the only person posted there. If every corper posted there refuse going to Benue, who will serve there?”

“Every one cannot refuse, and my son will not go.”

“So, what are you going to do?”

“My friend, an old boy of my school is an assistant Director

with the NYSC headquarters at Abuja. He is in charge of posting. I will give Kunle a note to him. He looked towards Kunle “which state would you prefer”? Kunle just kept mum.

“Any way”, he continued, “you can go to Kaduna, Rivers State, Abuja, the federal capital territory or even Lagos.”

“Lagos?” Kunle screamed simultaneously with his mother.

“What is wrong with that?” his father asked looking at both of them.

“Dad, I have spent all my life in Lagos, primary, secondary and university education, how can I serve here? Moreover, I am from Lagos state.”

“So, we can keep an eye on you. Most graduates think that the NYSC is a period for tasting wild and forbidden fruits. Hence, you end up running away from your places of primary assignments. There are no farewells, no ‘thank you’ parties and no proper handing-over or round ups. You just disappear because one girl or the parents are after you.”

“Dad, I can control myself.”

“Not with Benue girls. I hear that they are very loving and demanding, you never know what you are getting into, until you are hooked”.

“Papa Kunle, you have switched over from no jobs to the girls now. Which one do we take?”

“Both. The two reasons are genuine, one only compounding the other. In fact, I am phoning my friend now. I think I have his residential phone number somewhere among my complimentary cards. Kunle, please get me my card album.”

Kunle brought it and handed it over to him. He leafed through and found the card he wanted then he went over to the phone and called the number. After a brief pause, he spoke “hello” into the phone.

“Is your dad in? Please call him for me”.

After a longer pause, he continued.

“Good evening Oh! It’s me, Mr. Aweda.... Ah junior how is work, and the family? Yes we are fine...fine.”

They exchanged more pleasantries, and then he brought up the topic.

“My son has been posted for his NYSC... Ah, your daughter is also going to serve? Ha! How come I didn’t know you were attending evening school or adult education as a junior? You



were really fast indeed. Where is your daughter posted...? Benue? You mean Benue... Do you really mean Benue State?"

"What is wrong with that? I ...em... em... I just thought em... actually no problems. Thank you, they will meet there. Okay, thank you. We will see later. With that he dropped the phone. Okay lyakunle you have won, but do not say I did not warn you!" He stormed out of the parlour into the bedroom. Kunle and his mother exchanged a secret smile and suppressed their laughter.

"Oju, Oju? Impossible!" Kunle read his deployment letter again. "They can't do this to me" he cried.

Why? Why? I should have listened to my father. Now his warning has come to pass".

Since Kunle arrived at Makurdi, the capital of Benue State, for the one-month orientation exercise, it has all been fun and adventure. He was thrilled with the quiet and peaceful nature of the town and the innocence of the people. He wondered from where his dad obtained his facts. The people did not look jobless and they were always cheerful. At the camp, he took part in all the activities. He was made a platoon leader. He was able to trace Olayinka, the Assistant Director's daughter. They immediately became friends. She was a very disciplined born again Christian. She was always with him preventing him from exercising his male rights over the female corporers or even the girls who were around the camp. He, sometimes, regretted meeting Yinka but he still had high hopes as the real action is during the primary assignment. She had unknowingly helped him prepare for it as she had made him save all the allowances he received in the camp. When she suggested putting in a word on where they should do their primary assignment, he screamed "No, No! I like adventures and I usually leave such decisions to God." She liked that, but still said her father sent her a note to the Camp Director and she could insert his name as her father left a space for it. He emphatically said "No!" Honestly, he had hoped for any place but definitely not Oju!

Oju was one area no corper wanted to be posted to. No electric power, portable water, good roads, recreational facilities and, as a matter of fact, it was a cul-de-sac. A no go area; Kunle had prayed and prayed for a better posting but still refused Yinka's help to forestall their being posted to the same place, possibly a Christian organization or an NGO. Rather he became an active corper so that he could be retained in Makurdi either as a sports man or a platoon leader. At the end of the orientation exercise they all excitedly and in suspense waited for their deployment letters. When he heard his name Olukunle Aweda, he ran spiritedly forward to collect his deployment letter and now... "Oju" he mused, I wish I had allowed Yinka to help. As he turned to go and look for the other "Oju corporers" as they are mockingly referred to, he ran into Yinka.

"Where are you posted to?" He asked.

"The Christian Centre here in Makurdi. What about you?" She asked. He gave her his deployment letter.


"I told you; if only you had agreed, you would have at least been somewhere in Makurdi. Look now, Oju of all places."

Kunle wished she would not rub it in. He quickly turned away from her. As he moved a little further, he heard, "Oju corporers, Oju corporers. Please come this way!" He hurried towards the caller. Then he noticed the vehicle, a pick up van. It should have been white or milky in colour, but presently it was all covered with brown dust. The caller himself was completely covered with dust too. He looked like one who has just dug his way out of a shallow desert grave. Kunle's legs began to twitch and buckle. His agility and gait suddenly disappeared, but like a force drawing him, he continued moving towards the caller by the pick-up van. Soon they were ten corporers gathered around it. There were no females.

They had packed their bags and were the first group to depart. The man told them they had a long journey ahead. Kunle was happy to have avoided more questions from his friends and platoon mates, as he was very popular in the camp. He was then secretly thankful to Yinka for not allowing him to have a girlfriend in the camp. The relationship would have ended as abruptly as it had started and all he would have spent or invested in her wasted. No girl visits Oju, they say, and he didn't think it would be funny to visit a girl from Oju looking like a brown ghost. They all sat at the back of the pick-up van, the driver along with the official and a third person Kunle suspected must be mechanic or weight lifter sat in front. They could not discuss any topic for each of them was yet to come to terms with their posting. Others were also counting their losses of girlfriends, job opportunities or other dream ventures they had. Finally, unable to bear the silence any longer, one of the corporers asked, "Do they sell condoms at Oju?" They laughed. Then they started talking. They introduced themselves to each other and discussed how and when they would meet at the Local Government Headquarters. The corper posted to the Local Government Council Secretariat was asked to prepare for their visits and create an avenue for interaction with the staff of the LGC. Kunle heard a bump and looked out but all he could see was a wall of thick red dust. The tarred road had ended and the journey to Oju had truly begun. *(To be continued...)* ■

*Glossary – NYSC is the National Youth Service Corps, a 1 year national programme in Nigeria in service of the country after higher education training.*


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