

Local CONTENT Digest

H2 2023

NCDMB STAKEHOLDERS MAGAZINE

DIVESTMENTS in the oil and gas sector IMPACT ON LOCAL CONTENT





Nigerian Content R&D strides

Research and Development (R&D) is critical to optimising Nigeria's huge hydrocarbon resources, localising the knowledge and expertise required to drive innovation and industrialisation, ensuring the long term prosperity of Nigeria powered by its energy industry.

In achieving this objective, NCDMB has:

- Endowed US\$50m Nigerian Content Research and Development Fund (NCRDF).
- Established NCDMB's Technology Incubation and Innovation Centre.
- Established R&D Centres of Excellence in Federal Universities of Technology in Minna, Akure and Owerri; Niger Delta University, Amasoma and Modibbo Adama University of Technology, Yola.
- Supported Research Commercialisation, Basic and Applied Research.
- Endowed professorial chairs in universities and research institutions.

NCDMB

Nigerian Content
Development and
Monitoring Board

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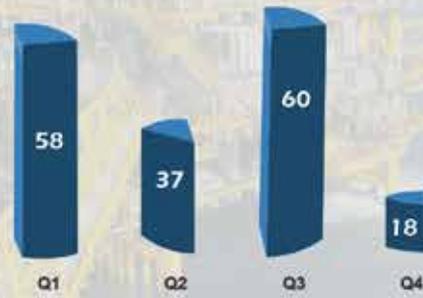
...Building local capacities in the Nigerian oil and gas industry.

SMART FACT

NOGIC JOS Additional Records In 2023



Number of NC Plans Issued



Number of Expatriate Quota Approved /Rejected in 2023



Number of Temporary work Permit Approved/Rejected in 2023



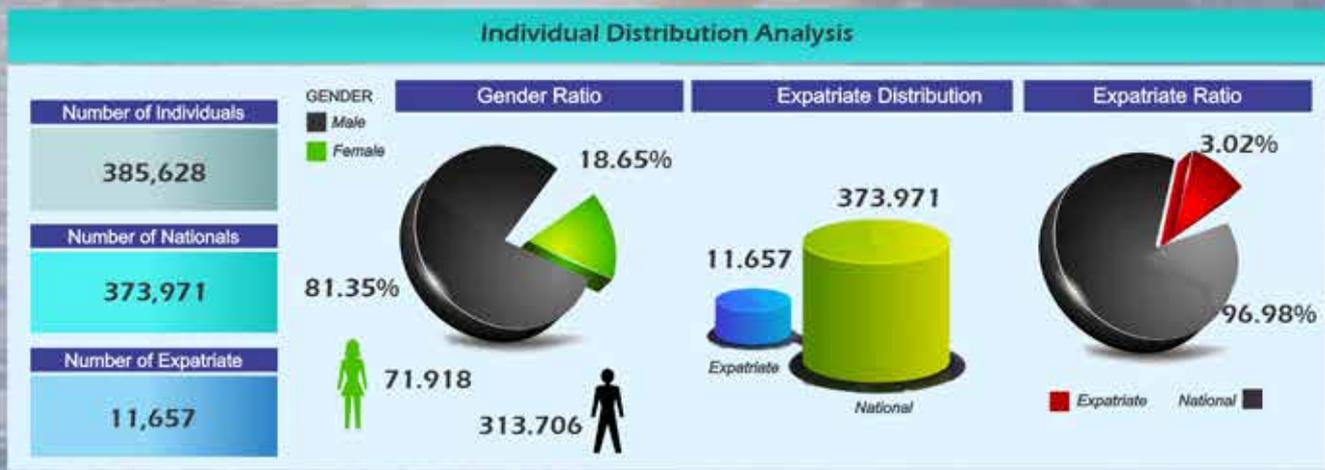
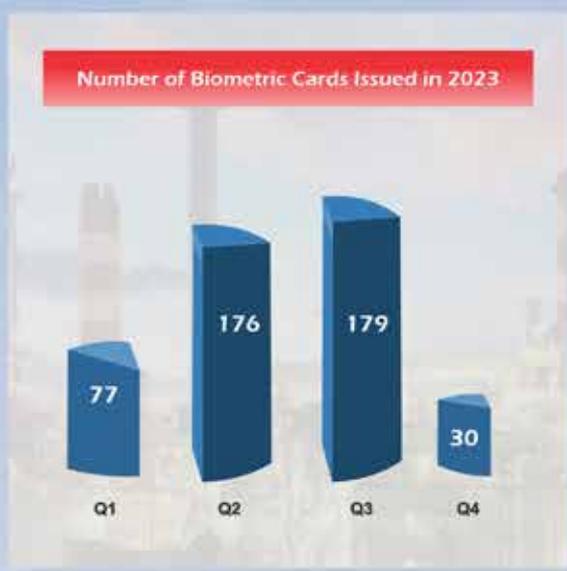
Number of NCCC Issued in 2023



Number of NCECs Issued 2023



SMART FACT



Data for January to November, 2023 compiled by Hauwa Hamisu



Enabling business is our watchword

The Nigerian oil and gas industry has been made the scapegoat for the current FOREX crisis, revenue deficit and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) challenges. Evidently, our industry is at an inflection point, to borrow a phrase from late Dr. Mohammed Sanusi Barkindo, immediate past Secretary General of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). The urgent challenges are the unbridled stealing of our crude oil and unacceptable low production, besides declining investments for over a decade and depletion from aging oil fields.

Little wonder the key performance indicators (KPIs) handed by President Bola Tinubu to Senator Heineken Lokpobiri, Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Oil) are to ramp up daily crude oil production from the lowest ebb of 1.1 million barrels per day (bpd) to meet our OPEC quota of 1.742 million bpd, which would lead to increased exports earnings and resources to fund the national budget, before aiming for two million bpd and three million bpd by 2030.

Thankfully, the concerted efforts of the minister, the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL), oil companies and security stakeholders have started to pay off, just as the national oil company and Aiteo Eastern E&P launched a new crude oil grade known as *Nembe* in October. The injection of *Nembe* crude probably contributed to the marginal improvement in Nigeria's crude oil production, which averaged 1.35 million bpd in October, according to data from the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC).

One key and sustainable step towards increasing our crude oil production was the signing of the Service Level Agreement (SLA) in September between the NNPCL, the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) and five international oil-producing companies - Shell Petroleum Development Company, ExxonMobil, Chevron Nigeria, Nigerian Agip Oil Company Limited and Total Exploration and Production Nigeria.

SLAs key to efficient government-business relations

The SLA encourages fast-tracked introduction of new oil and gas projects and conclusion of their final investment decisions (FIDs). Other objectives are to ensure timely approvals of contract documents, shorten the contracting cycle from between 24 to 36 months, to six months, cut the cost of projects and ensure compliance with the provisions of the Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry Content Development (NOGICD) Act.

We (NCDMB) introduced the SLA in May 2017 with the Nigeria LNG Limited. It enabled our speedy approval of the US\$5billion NLNG Train 7 project in 2020 at the height of COVID-19 pandemic. Our implementation of the SLA is the vector for the hitch-free Nigerian Content approvals for the construction of the Train 7 project, currently at 52 percent, employing 8,300 Nigerians of different skill sets.

Few weeks ago, my management team and I participated in a retreat with the Nigeria LNG leadership at their operational base in Finima, Bonny Island, Rivers State, where they pressed on with their commendable goal of going beyond compliance with the NOGICD Act. Dr. Philip Mshelbila, Managing Director, Nigeria LNG and I used the opportunity to sign the agreement on the implementation of the Oil and Gas E-Market

Place, which will activate the rollout of tender opportunities from the company on the E-Market platform.

With the Nigeria LNG, we have shown the example of a successful collaboration between a regulator and a business entity for the benefit of the economy.

Through the SLA and several other initiatives, we have effectively positioned the NCDMB as a *Business Enabler* rather than just the regulator of Local Content. Our credentials were further validated in October when we retained the position as the Best Federal Agency in transparency and efficiency in business for the second year. The Executive Order 001 Compliance Ranking is conducted by the Presidential Enabling Business Environment Council (PEBEC). Our current award was based on the 2023 Half Year Ranking, from January to June 2023. Our other recent accolades include the *Best Federal Agency in Digital Skills Development*, won in the Federal Govtech Public Service Awards and the Platinum rating in the Bureau of Public Service Reforms (BPSR) Self-Assessment Tool (SAT).

Our business-friendly posture is derived from Section 70(h) of the NOGICD Act, which mandates the Board to support and develop the capabilities and capacities of Nigerian oil and gas companies. This charge was strengthened by the Nigerian Content 10-Year Strategic Roadmap, where Enabling Business Environment and Technical Capability Development rank high among the five pillars that support the lofty targets and initiatives earmarked in the roadmap.

Supporting businesses to thrive

The biggest manifestation of our enabling businesses mantra is the conception and development of our flagship projects - the Nigerian Oil and Gas Parks Scheme (NOGaPS). On October 10, Minister Lokpobiri toured the Emeyal-1, Bayelsa NOGaPS project and was impressed by the breadth and progress of the industrial park designed to stimulate manufacturing of oil and gas components and ancillary products. It is worth restating that manufacturing is the lever for sustainable local content, industrialisation, job creation and national development. Coincidentally, the Federal Government announced recently through the Minister of State for Labour and Employment, Nkiru Onyejeocha, plans to "establish industrial hubs tailored to the strengths of each region".

The NOGaPS in Cross River and Bayelsa states will begin operations in early 2024, while other sites at Akwa Ibom, Delta, Edo, Imo, and Ondo states are at various stages of development. Lokpobiri rightly described the NOGaPS and the NCDMB Gas Hub at Polaku in Yenagoa Local Government Area of Bayelsa State as game changers in the nation's drive for in-country capacities and capabilities that would eliminate dependence on imported operational tools and machinery.

The NCDMB took a critical step to make the oil and gas parks successful by introducing the \$50million NOGAPS Manufacturing Fund that can be accessed by firms that would set up at the parks. This fund is part of the bouquet of Nigerian Content Intervention Fund loan products that we created to provide flexible and affordable financing for qualified Nigerian oil and gas businesses, to address the funding challenge limiting their growth.

It is no surprise that Lokpobiri considers the Fund scheme as one of our most impactful initiatives because of its catalytic effect on capacity building and job creation. The minister underscored the nexus between the Board's mandate and programmes with Mr. President's economic agenda. Indeed, the Board's programmes dovetail directly into three items in the Administration's Roadmap, notably, economic growth and job creation, access to capital and improving the playing field on which people and particularly companies operate.

The Board's enabling business philosophy equally provided the basis for hosting the Africa Local Content Roundtable (ALCR) in the penultimate week of October in Abuja, attended by delegates from 23 African countries under the auspices of the African Petroleum Producers Organisation (APPO). We initiated the roundtable in June 2021 to promote local content development across Africa, create a platform for Nigerian oil and gas companies to forge alliances with counterparts from sister countries, and explore market opportunities in the continent in the spirit of the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA).

The same mindset informed our conception of a new Monitoring and Evaluation Reporting Template presented to oil and gas stakeholders in October in Lagos. The new template will enhance the monitoring and evaluation framework, simplify templates, and encourage stakeholders' cooperation towards achieving the 70 percent Nigerian Content target envisaged under the Nigerian Content 10-Year Strategic Roadmap by 2027.

It is gratifying that our deliberate and comprehensive efforts to foster Nigerian oil and gas businesses are being appreciated by stakeholders within and outside the oil and gas industry. We have proven that efficiency, technology, transparency, quality, and predictable service can reside with an agency of government. We are motivated to strive towards ensuring stakeholders' delight as the next phase of our service delivery.

We have been reenergised by President Tinubu administration's com-

Our business-friendly posture is derived from Section 70(h) of the NOGICD Act, which mandates the Board to support and develop the capabilities and capacities of Nigerian oil and gas companies. This charge was strengthened by the Nigerian Content 10-Year Strategic Roadmap, where Enabling Business Environment and Technical Capability Development rank high among the five pillars that support the lofty targets and initiatives earmarked in the roadmap.

mitment to sustain the successes recorded in the oil and gas industry in the past few years and consolidate the gains of Nigerian Content implementation. This provides the firm assurance that the ongoing divestments of onshore and shallow water oil and gas assets by some international oil and gas companies to indigenous firms would be approved, concluded timeously, and managed carefully to improve the levels of Nigerian content compliance, tax remittances and increase crude oil and gas production.

As we prepare to bid goodbye to 2023, we look forward to 2024 when we should expect full resurgence of the oil and gas sector and the commissioning of the Bayelsa and Cross River NOGaPS, and a few other partnerships of ours.

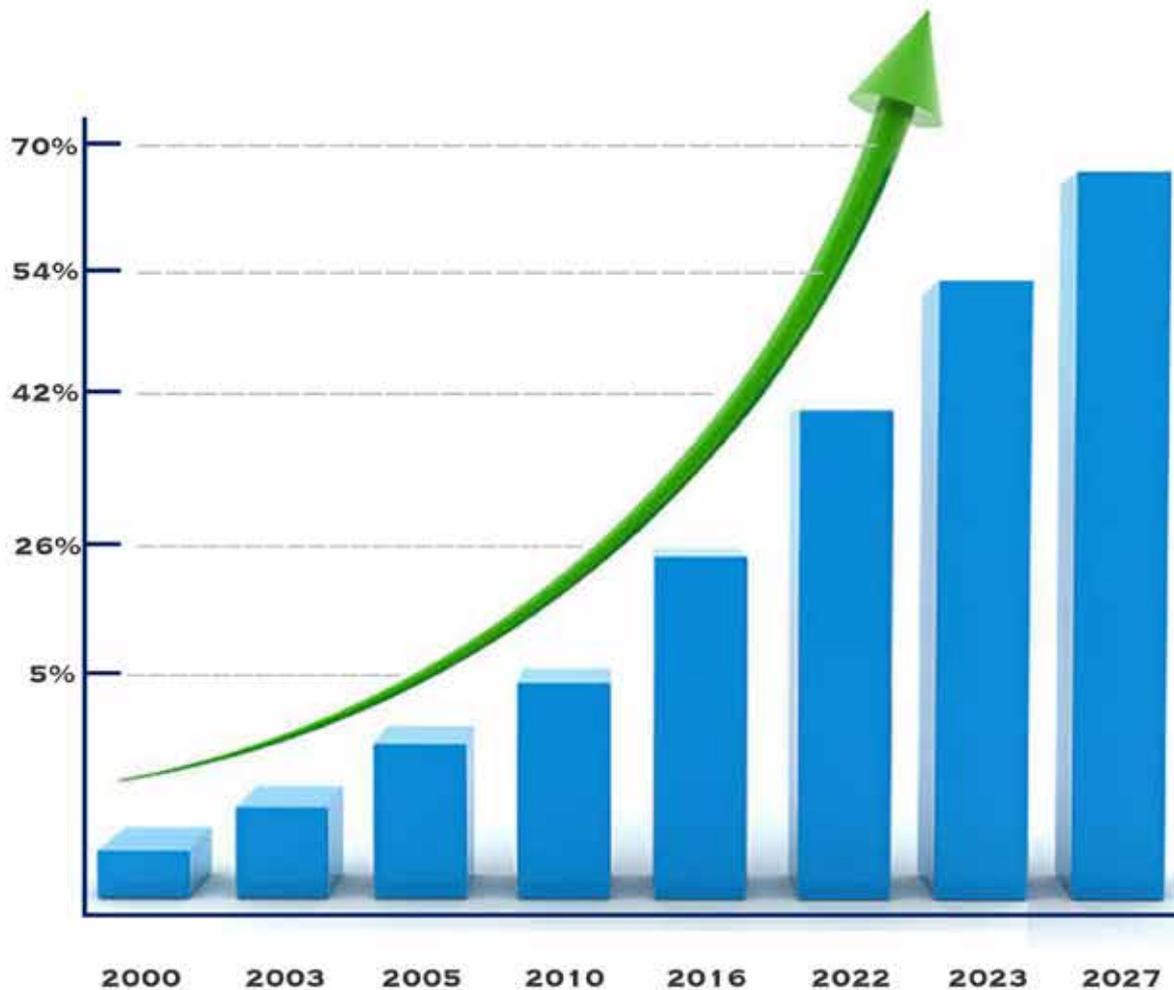
We can agree that 2023 has been a mixed bag of challenges and successes, but it was certainly the period NCDMB set the marker that WE ARE NOT JUST A REGULATOR BUT AN ENABLER OF BUSINESS.

See you in 2024.





Nigerian Content Trajectory



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...Building local capacities in the Nigerian oil and gas industry.

**NOGOF
2023**
NIGERIAN OIL AND GAS
OPPORTUNITY FAIR 2023

HIGHLIGHTS



Counter

27 The Big Interview

The new government's disposition is to support businesses to thrive. Senator Heineken Lokpobiri, Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Oil), in this exclusive interview, outlines his agenda for the oil and gas sector, and what he would do differently.



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Divestment of onshore assets by International Oil Companies is akin to a double-edged sword: it has both upsides and downsides. With deepening local content in the industry, the apprehensions may be misplaced, if the post-divestments opportunities are well managed.



44 Flying the Flag

Fairtex is an excellent example of the success of Project100 initiative. With footprints in six African countries, the company is proudly flying Nigeria's flag, declares Mr. Jacob Idungafa, Managing Director, Fairtex Group.



nts

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By launching the only automated heat-treatment furnace in Africa, MG Vowgas has, by this huge investment, deepened industrialisation anchored on local content. Its Managing Director, Mr. Godwin Izomor, shares his company's fast-paced growth story.



55 Innovations

Electric-powered water-taxis and post-crash fires in petrol tanker trucks prevention, among others, are some of the novel solutions by startups from NCDMB's Technology Incubation and Innovation Centre. The R&D investments are yielding results.



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If there were any lingering doubts about the efficacy of NOGIC JQS, Samuel Balami's meteoric rise to HSE Manager puts the doubts to rest. It is a proven, efficient platform for empowering young Nigerians.



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African Local Content is fostering collaboration and opening up new markets. Alhaji Abdulmalik Halilu, Director, Planning, Research and Statistics at NCDMB, says the initiative is an imperative for further growth.

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E-commerce is moving *amala* from its traditional setting, and is now being served in offices, attracting new, younger connoisseurs.

Isi Agu fabric could only be worn by well-heeled males in time past. The womenfolk are making a strong ownership pitch.



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With security improving across the country in the last few months, it is time to rediscover the outdoor treasures of Nigeria. This holiday is the perfect time to go on hiking, to enjoy Nigeria's beautiful landscapes from vantage positions.



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LOCAL CONTENT

IS WORKING

Local content in the oil and gas sector is growing in leaps and bounds. When you leaf through the pages of this magazine, you will see how indigenous capacities are being exported to other African countries. There is no greater attestation to this than Fairtex, one of the beneficiaries of the Board's Project 100 initiative, currently has presence in six African countries; not one or two but six countries! It is an incredible success.

There are many more companies flying the local content flag. Take MG Vowgas, for instance, which has upped the fabrication ante by launching the most sophisticated and modern furnace in Africa. The two companies, among many others, are showcasing the obvious. If given an environment conducive for growth, supported by the right policies, Nigerians are capable of excelling even in the most complex of tasks.

This is why the apprehension over divestment by International Oil Companies (IOCs) in some of their onshore assets could be largely misplaced. The IOCs are moving to deep and ultradeep offshore acreages. Nigerian producers, including AITEO, have demonstrated capacity to enhance the value of these assets. Our **Cover** segment is devoted to examining the issues around the IOCs divestment scheme and what this means to the sector and the country. As explained by our Executive Secretary, Nigerians taking over these assets could potentially have more upsides than downsides, if well managed.

This edition of *Local Content Digest* is a cel-

ebration of sorts of the successes Nigerian service companies are posting. Amazon Energy and Jevkon Oil and Gas, featured in **Milestone and Flying the Flag** segments, respectively, are indeed, flying the local content flag. Also in **Trends**, you will get to read the huge milestones being recorded as a result of implementing local content in the oil and gas industry.

We bring you our usual insights into the unique offerings of Nigerians, in fashion, entertainment and tourism, among several others. If you are thinking of what to do this holiday, read up hiking opportunities in the country. Indeed, anywhere you may be within this period, there is a chance that you are quite close to a tourist spot that you could take your family and friends to have a great outdoor experience. Yes, whether it is Southsouth, or Northwest, there is a mountainous region close to you. That is how richly blessed Nigeria is.

Then there is the great testimony of the workings of the NOGIC JQS, as told by Engr. Samuel Balami, HSE Manager at MG Vowgas. He did not have any connection. He did not have to, because the NOGIC JQS is the best connector for young Nigerians to land a fine spot in the oil and gas sector. I believe after reading his story in the **Pacesetters** segment, the platform will be inundated with more Nigerians registering. If there is any leveler ever, the NOGIC JQS is.

I wish you all a happy holidays and a great 2024.

Esueme Dan Kikile, Esq

Nigeria, Equatorial Guinea mull inter-country investments in oil sector

The governments of Nigeria and the Republic of Equatorial Guinea have opened discussions on new partnerships, such as the establishment of a joint logistics base, deployment of indigenous capacities across countries, and lowering the costs of major oil and gas operations.

Both countries announced the exploration of these areas in July when Mr Gabriel Mbega Obiang Lima, Minister of Planning and Economic Diversification, Republic of Equatorial Guinea, engaged Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary, Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB), at the Board's liaison office in Abuja.

Conversations at the meeting centred on inviting reputable Nigerian oil and gas service companies to establish their operational bases at Equatorial Guinea to enable the companies use the new locations to launch their activities in neighbouring Gabon and Cameroon, as well as Angola.

The minister suggested that oil and gas operators in the Gulf of Guinea could cut their operational costs significantly by collaborating in the scheduling of their respective work programmes, such as mobilisation and demobilisation of drilling rigs and other assets. In addition, the pooling of demand profiles among the countries could attract investments from giants like General Electric, which would only invest in a jurisdiction if they were assured of markets from neighbouring countries.

On the clamour by Western nations for energy transition and plans to progressively displace fossil fuels with renewable energy solutions, the two leaders insisted that fossil fuels would remain the world's dominant energy source for several decades, while their nations would continue to exploit their oil and gas resources to the fullest and use the proceeds to develop their national economies, including renewable opportunities.

MG VOWGAS acquires new facilities

MG VOWGAS, a leading engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) firm, has unveiled new hi-tech equipment. These include 200-tonne heat treatment furnace and dish head forming machine. The new equipment was unveiled at a ceremony in October at the company's yard in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

During the unveiling ceremony, Mr. Godwin Izomor, Group Managing Director, reaffirmed the company's commitment to advancing local content development, embracing innovation, and fostering sustainable growth within the energy sector. The

company's heat furnace is the largest in the country, with advanced technical capabilities, while the dish-head forming machine is equally unique and fills a big gap in the industry.

The facility was commissioned by Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary, Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB). He praised MG VOWGAS for its remarkable local content perfor-



Engr. Gbenga Komolafe, Chief Executive Officer, Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) and Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary, NCDMB, arriving at the Nigerian Oil and Gas Conference in Abuja, July.

mance, technological capability and innovation.

Wabote noted the transformation of the company's fabrication yard with six workshops as against three in 2018 within its 118,000 square metres physical space. He said: "MG VOWGAS is a superb example of what a Nigerian oil and gas service company can grow into over a period of time in demonstration of the resilience of Nigerian enterprise."

He encouraged the company to take its services to other African countries, hinting that other African countries were ready to collaborate with Nigerian businesses and tap from Nigeria's experience in the implementation of local content practice.



Workers at MG VOWGAS new facility.

NCDMB, NNPC, IOCs sign agreement on oil industry contract cycle

With the goal of ramping up Nigeria's crude oil production, ensuring compliance with the provisions of the Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry Content Development (NOGICD) Act, and timely approvals of documents, the Nigerian Content Development and

Monitoring Board (NCDMB) in September signed a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPC Ltd) and five international oil-producing companies.

The agreement was signed by Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary of NCDMB, and Mrs Oritsemeyiwa A. Eysan, Executive Vice President Upstream of NNPC Ltd. Others included Mr Osagie Okunbor, Managing Director of Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) and Country Chair of Shell Companies in Nigeria (SciN); Mr Shane Harris, Chairman and Managing Director of ExxonMobil's affil-

ates in Nigeria; Mr Iwueze Cosmas, Director of Joint Ventures for Chevron Nigeria; Mr. Fabrizio Bloomfield, Managing Director, Nigerian Agip Oil Company Ltd and Mr Obi Imemba, Executive Director, Joint Ventures, Total Exploration and Production Nigeria.

The SLA was conceptualised by the NCDMB with the goal to conclude the oil and gas industry's tendering to contract award processes within six months. The Executive Secretary described the target as realistic with all key parties participating in the execution of the SLA. He expressed delight that NNPC signed up to the MoU, being the senior partner in the joint ventures and concessionaire of the production sharing contracts (PSC) arrangements that govern the operations of the industry.

NCDMB rated as Best in Efficiency, Transparency, Digital Skills Dev

The Nigerian Content Development and

These sterling performances followed the Board's rating as "a Level 5 Platinum Level organisation" in a summary report of the Bureau of Public Service Reforms (BPSR) Self-assessment Tool (SAT) released in January 2023, a rating which translates as "Exceptional Performance with a performance level of 90.5 percent".

This accomplishment underscores NCDMB's unwavering dedication to creating an environment conducive for local and international businesses to succeed as well as putting in place initiatives for streamlining processes, reducing bureaucratic bottlenecks and ensuring that businesses in Nigeria operate optimally.

Nigeria's oil industry growing steadily - Wabote

The Nigerian oil and gas industry is growing on several fronts, says Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary of the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board. Wabote said this in October at the third Biennial International Conference on Hydrocarbon Science and Technology, organised by the Petroleum Training Institute (PTI) in Abuja.



Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary, NCDMB with Senator Heineken Lokpobiri, Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Oil) exchanging pleasantries at the African Local Content Roundtable at Abuja in October.

Monitoring Board (NCDMB) has retained its position as the best Federal agency in transparency and efficiency in business.

In the 2023 Half Year Executive Order 001 Compliance Ranking, which covered from January to June 2023, NCDMB scored 83.06 percent to clinch the top position in the Federal Government's ranking of ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs), the second straight year it was clinching the award. The report was released in October, and it builds on the Board's sterling performance in 2022 when it was that year's top performer.

The Executive Order 001 (EO1) Compliance Report is compiled by the Presidential Enabling Business Environment Council (PEBEC, and is determined by a combination of the weighted scores for efficiency and transparency directives. In addition, NCDMB also clinched the *Best Federal MDA in Digital Skills Development* in the Federal Govtech Public Service Awards, which was awarded in September.

He listed the positive trends as the growth of oil reserves, gas production and utilisation, local refining and skills acquisition. The Executive Secretary said the trends "portend great opportunities for the future of the oil and gas industry in Nigeria".

Senator Heineken Lokpobiri, Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Oil), who also attended the event, urged the participants to develop home-grown solutions to the challenges facing the Nigerian oil and gas industry. Some of the issues are pipeline vandalism and low productivity. The minister mandated all the agencies under the Ministry of Petroleum Resources to collaborate towards inventing relevant technological solutions needed to address the challenges. He said efforts must be directed towards increasing Nigeria's crude oil production and enhancing revenue from crude oil sales.

Dr. Farouq Ibrahim, Secretary General of the African Petroleum Producers Organisation (APPO), highlighted the pivotal role that the oil and gas industry must play in shaping a responsible, low-carbon energy future in navigating a dynamic world of opportunities and challenges. He stressed the significance of collaborative research and development among Af-

rican oil-producing nations as a strategy to create transformative solutions and ensure safe, efficient, and environmentally conscientious hydrocarbon operations.

Nigerian Content key to Renewed Hope agenda – Lokpobiri

Effective implementation of the Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry Content Development (NOGICD) Act 2010 is pivotal to actualising the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Bola Tinubu's administration, Senator Heineken Lokpobiri, Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Oil) has said.

Lokpobiri spoke in October after his tour of the facilities and projects of the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) in Bayelsa State. He noted that the key mandates of the NCDMB, which include the promotion of in-country value addition in the oil and gas industry, promoting local manufacturing, developing human and material capacities and job creation, are important for meeting the key aspirations of the current administration.

He lauded the performance of the Executive Secretary and the management of the Board, describing the Nigerian Content Intervention (NCI) Fund as one of the Board's most impactful initiatives, in supporting qualified oil and gas companies to access the capital they need to grow, build capacities and create jobs.

The minister also spoke on the importance of the Nigerian Oil and Gas Park Scheme (NOGaPS) at Emeyal 1, in Ogbia Local Government Area of Bayelsa State towards catalysing in-country manufacturing in the oil and gas and linkage sectors and job creation.

Lokpobiri praised the Board for constructing and maintaining the iconic 17-storey Nigerian Content Tower and the 1,000-capacity NCDMB Conference Hall, describing the facilities as world-class.

'Why NCDMB supports indigenous oil firms to build capacity'

The Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) has said Section 70(h) of the Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry Content Development (NOGICD) Act mandates it to support and develop the capabilities and capacities of Nigerian oil and gas companies.

Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary of NCDMB said this at the 2023 Nigerian Oil And Gas Energy Week in July. He said that this provision of the NOGICD Act is why the Board conceived the US\$-300million Nigerian Content Intervention Fund with the Bank of Industry (BoI), the \$100million Matched Fund with NEXIM



Executive Secretary, Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB), Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote with members of the National Executive Committee and NCDMB Branch Executive of the Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association (PENGASSAN) at the 2023 Energy and Labour Summit in Abuja.

Bank, the \$50million R&D Intervention Fund and the \$50million NOGAPS Manufacturing Fund, to support qualified oil and gas companies.

Other support initiatives, he said, include partnering local businesses to establish modular refineries, gas processing plants, LPG storage facilities, base oil production plant, LPG depot and refilling plants, and other projects with exit plans once the goals are achieved.

The NCDMB boss said the Board was developing the NOGAPS Industrial Parks to mitigate the challenges affecting manufacturing in the oil and gas industry. The parks are at various stages of completion in Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo and Ondo states, with the parks in Cross River and Bayelsa states due to commence operations in early 2024. Wabote expressed appreciation to Shell Petroleum Development Company Joint Venture and the ExxonMobil Joint Venture for their contributions to the industrial parks using the Capacity Development Initiative (CDI) programmes.

'Judiciary key to Nigerian Content Implementation'

The judiciary plays a critical role in the successful implementation of the Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry Content Development (NOGICD) Act and must be kept abreast with the implementation of the law, Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary of the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB), has said.

Wabote said this at the one-day sensitisation workshop for members of the Bench and the Bar in Port Harcourt, the Rivers State capital, in July. He noted that the judiciary is the key institution for the interpretation of laws, hence deserves of constant

acquaintance with the salient provisions of the NOGICD Act.

The Board organised similar workshops for Federal High Court Judges, Justices of the Court of Appeal and Supreme Court Justices in 2018 and 2019, in partnership with the National Judicial Institute.

Sir Siminalaye Fubara, Rivers State Governor, who declared the workshop open, commended the NCDMB "for being alive to its statutory responsibilities." Represented by Professor Zacchaeus Adangor, the Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice, the Governor said: "The intendment of the NOGICD Act is laudable. The implementation is crucial, requiring boldness and courage."

His Lordship, Hon. Justice Simeon Chibuzor Amadi, the State Chief Judge, noted that the "benefits of the workshop to judges are enormous". He said adjudication in oil and gas requires understanding of the workings of NCDMB, the industry as well as relevant operational guidelines.



Management and staff of NCDMB with senior officials of the Anti-Corruption Academy of Nigeria (ACAN) at the conclusion of the three-day sensitisation workshop on "Achieving Zero-tolerance for Corruption in the Workplace", at NCDMB Conference Hall.

Construction of Ondo Oil and Gas Park billed to commence

The construction of an oil and gas park in Ilaje Local Government Area of Ondo State will start soon, according to Mr. Akintunde Adelana, Director, Monitoring and Evaluation at the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB).

The facility is one of six being built in carefully selected oil producing locations across the country under the Nigerian Oil and Gas Park Scheme (NOGAPS). It is in furtherance of the Board's mandate to develop in-country capacity in the oil and gas industry.

Adelana announced this at the 2023 Develop Ondo 2.0 Investment Summit in August at Akure, the Ondo State capital. He said the parks are intended to catalyse the manufacturing of equipment components and spares required in oil industry operations.

Also speaking at the event, NCDMB's Director of Corporate Services, Mr. Patrick Daziba Obah, said the first original equipment manufacturers (OEMs), service companies and other oil and gas firms that would set up operations in the Nigerian oil and gas parks would enjoy first mover privileges. Obah was represented at the event by Mr. Silas Ajimijaye, Acting General Manager, Directorate of Planning, Research and Statistics. He praised the Ondo State government for giving the Board necessary support for the park to take off, particularly in facilitating the Board's efforts to pay compensation to communities for the land that had been acquired for the project.

ICPC lauds NCDMB's stance on anti-corruption in workplace, procurement

The Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) has hailed the Nigerian Content Development

opment and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) for its zero-tolerance for corruption in the workplace and for supporting the anti-corruption drive of the Commission.

Prof Olatunde Babawale, Provost of the Anti-Corruption Agency of Nigeria (ACAN), an organ of the ICPC, gave the commendation during the sensitisation workshops held for the Board's staff members in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State and Abuja.

The goal of the workshops was to sensitise the Board's staff members on the various types of corruption, potential consequences, and appropriate safeguards as well as the anti-corruption requirements and best practices in public procurement. Babawale noted the critical role that NCDMB plays in the oil and gas industry and the need to sanitise procedures in the sector.

Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary of NCDMB said the workshops would equip the workers with the best anti-corruption practices and procedures. He noted that some of the errors committed by public servants might be due to a lack of understanding of relevant laws. Public servants, he said, needed trainings to understand and protect themselves and their organisations from corruption and corrupt practices.

On anti-corruption efforts, Wabote said that the Board established the NCDMB-Anti-Corruption and Transparency Unit (ACTU), chaired by the Director, Monitoring and Evaluation, Mr Akintunde Adelana. The Board also conceptualised and published its "Procurement Policies and Procedure Manual" to enhance compliance with the Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP) requirements.

New Nigerian Content Reporting Template underway

A new Monitoring and Evaluation Reporting Template has been conceptualised and pre-



(L-R): Engr. Abayomi Bamidele, Director, Projects Certification and Authorisation Division, Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB); Alhalji Lai Mohammed, former Minister of Information and Culture; Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary, NCDMB; the former minister's aide and Esueme Dan Kikile, Esq, Manager, Corporate Communication, NCDMB, during a visit by the former minister to NCDMB corporate headquarters in September.

mented to stakeholders in the oil and gas industry by the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB).

The new template was unveiled at a sensitisation workshop in October in Lagos. The new template was designed to enhance the monitoring and evaluation framework, simplify templates, and encourage stakeholders' cooperation towards achieving the 70 percent Nigerian Content target by 2027 as envisaged under the Nigerian Content 10-Year Strategic Roadmap.

Engr. Jefferson Tuatonga, General Manager, Upstream Monitoring at NCDMB, outlined the workshop's objectives to include addressing reporting challenges, introducing new templates and preparing for automation. In keeping with the Board's collaboration with the industry in the creation of policies, the general manager urged stakeholders to provide their feedback until the end of November 2023. He assured the stakeholders that the comments and inputs would be considered before the template is finalised and issued for implementation.

Ms. Alexis Emelle, Manager, Complaints and Investigation, Monitoring and Evaluation at NCDMB, said the goal of enhancing the MED reporting template is meant to facilitate automation and real-time reporting on the NOGICJQS platform. Other objectives are to streamline reporting processes and enhance Nigerian Content in the oil and gas industry. She added that the workshop was geared to encourage stakeholders' engagement and feedback, canvassing support for the goals of the Nigerian Content 10-year Strategic Roadmap.

17 portfolio firms selected in NCDMB, Founder Institute's incubation

Seventeen portfolio companies have concluded research and innovation-based training at the Technology Incubation and Innovation Centre (TIIC) of the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB).

The 17 companies were among 54 incubates that underwent the seven-month programme initiated by the NCDMB in partnership with the Nigerian chapter of Founder Institute (FI), based in Silicon Valley, California, United States.

The research and innovation endeavours of the companies yielded products in pipeline protection technology, embedded systems, drilling fluid additives, gas penetration technology, tele-medicine, electric-powered engines for inland water transportation/charging solutions, among others.

At the unveiling of the companies in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State in August, Mr. Patrick Daziba Obah, Director, Corporate Services at NCDMB, said the TIIC was established to serve as an "Ecosystem for innovators to think through new ideas for technology adaptation or process improvement" and "networking between researchers, inves-



Engr. Bashi Ahmed (3rd left), Supervisor, Projects Certification & Authorisation Division, NCDMB participated in the Young Professionals Leadership Summit, at the Nigerian Association of Petroleum Explorationist's 41st International Conference and Exhibition in Lagos, November.

tors and end-users in the oil and gas industry and its linkage sectors”.

Alhaji Abdulmalik Halilu, Director of Planning, Research and Statistics, NCDMB, said: “We are celebrating the 17 portfolio companies because they have moved from ideation to the market phase.”

Mr. Adebayo Omole, Managing Partner, Matrix Solicitors, counselled the new portfolio companies to “get all the certifications required; get your ideas patented; make sure your operational agreements are tight; deliver on your promises; make sure your technologies don’t fail; open yourselves to collaboration and defend your brand. Don’t let people steal your intellectual property.”

Engr. ThankGod Egbe, Managing Director, Cyphercrescent Limited, advised the incubates to leave the technical area, move into marketing, stressing the importance of marketing communication and related activities in their activities.

‘Tinkering with the PIA would scare investors’

Making unending changes to the structures set up by Petroleum Industry Act 2021 could dampen investors’ confidence, stalling new projects in the oil and gas sector, Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary of the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB), has said.

Wabote’s caution followed insinuations a few months ago of possible changes by the President Bola Tinubu’s administration, including mergers of some agencies established under the PIA. Speaking at a panel session at the Nigerian Economic Summit in Abuja, the Executive Secretary explained that the PIA 2021 contains adequate provisions to ignite growth in the energy sector, advising the Federal Government and key stakeholders to avoid the temptation of tweaking the law at every turn.

He said: “Policy somersaults kill the confidence of investors. Once a nation or economic sector is known for trial-and-error initiatives, it makes the investors adopt a wait-and-see attitude or move on to other entities.”

Wabote acknowledged the need to seek areas of improvement but cautioned that “it is injurious to the investment climate if we are in a perpetual state of policy modifications or amendment of laws that we are yet to even progress to full implementation”.

The Executive Secretary recalled that it took the Nigerian oil and gas industry almost two decades to pass the PIA, and many stakeholders blamed the delay as the reason for the lack of investment in the oil and gas industry. He urged players in the industry to complete ongoing projects and



(L-R): Mr. Akintunde Adelana, Director, Monitoring and Evaluation, NCDMB; Dr. (Mrs) Nnaeto Orazulike; Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary, NCDMB and Ichie Dr. Nnaeto Orazulike, Group Managing Director, Genesis Group performing the cutting of tape at the commissioning of the corporate headquarters and training academy of Genesis Group in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

deploy the provisions of the PIA to stimulate the necessary growth in the energy sector.

Need for sustainable local content practice in Africa - Wabote

Oil and gas producing countries in Africa have been charged to institute sustainable Local Content practices and pursue in-country value addition, so that they can benefit maximally from the exploitation of their hydrocarbon resources.

Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary, Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) outlined these ideas when he spoke at the Namibia Oil and Gas Conference in Windhoek, Namibia. If implemented, he said, they have the potential to boost in-country value addition and sustainable growth of the oil industry on the continent. The ideas are Regulatory Framework, Gap Analysis, Capacity Building, Funding and Incentives, Research and Development and Access to Market.

The NCDMB’s helmsman noted that an enabling regulatory framework like the Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry Content Development (NOGICD) Act, 2010, is fundamental in local content practice. On gap analysis, he said: “Baseline and periodic gap analyses are essential to determine gaps that are needed to be closed in the areas of skills, facilities and infrastructure.”

He said structured capacity building intervention “is essential to spur the development of in-country capacities and capabilities” while implementation of major projects is a prerequisite. Wabote emphasised that funding and incentives are essential to implement local content programmes, develop infrastructure, attract new investments and keep existing businesses afloat, where required.

On research and development, he said: “Local content thrives where there are robust research and development guidelines to drive development of home-grown technology.” The Executive Secretary added that access to market is essential, noting: “The

policies or laws, the capacities developed, and the research and development efforts will become frustrating if there is no outlet to utilise them and receive reward for sustainability and growth.”

Genesis Group opens academy, creates 2,500 jobs

Genesis Group Limited, a hospitality conglomerate, in November, opened its corporate head office and training academy in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The firm is the leading provider of catering services for major oil and gas companies and employs over 2,500 persons in its operations. Its footprints are visible in seven standard hotels, 12 cinemas, and 30 restaurants in eight states.

Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary, Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB), commissioned the facility. He highlighted the specialisation and expertise required in catering for the oil and gas industry. The Executive Secretary added that the Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry Content Development (NOGICD) Act does not allow for the lowering of standards under any guise.

The academy will train students in Hotel and Tourism Management, Client Service Dynamics, Business Processes, Etiquette, Emotional Intelligence, Logistics and Supply Chain, among other courses. The Executive Secretary hailed the initiative, emphasising the importance of critical skills in delivering wholesome hospitality experience.

He said the Genesis Group and other firms facilitated the actualisation of provisions of the NOGICD Act, which stipulates, among others, “a minimum of 80 percent Nigerian Content” in catering services in the indus-

try.

Ichie Dr. Nnaeto Orazulike, Founder and Group Managing Director of Genesis, thanked the NCDMB boss and representatives of international oil companies (IOCs) for their support and patronage, assuring that the group would surpass its current achievements.

20 Nigerians graduate from NCDMB, Navy diving programme

Twenty young Nigerians in September graduated from the Nigerian Navy Underwater Warfare School, Navy Town, Lagos State. The programme was sponsored by the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) and organised in partnership with Mieka Dive Training Institute (MDTI).

The training was commercial air diving training programme and it lasted five months with the trainees certificated as Class-I and Class-II divers.

Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary, NCDMB, said at the close-out ceremony that the rapid expansion of the Nigerian offshore industry with more oilfield development taking place in the deep offshore basin created the need for aggressive skills development to support strategic projects, both ongoing and futuristic. The Executive Secretary noted that the professional diving industry in Nigeria is currently dominated by foreigners, hence the focus of the training. He added that the Board prioritises human capital development in areas with identified skill gaps.

On the significance of what the participants accomplished during the training, the Nigerian Content boss noted that their newly acquired skills and knowledge had made them assets in line with the Board's strategic objective of developing an industry skill pool of qualified Class-I and Class-II divers.

Rear Admiral Patrick Nwatu, Flag Officer Commanding (FOC), Naval Training Command, Lagos, represented by Cmdr. Adamu Yahaya, Commandant, NNS Quorra, said the graduates were in the fourth batch of air divers trained in the facility.

NCDMB, PTI Partner On Capacity Development

The Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) and Petroleum Training Institute (PTI), Effurun, Delta State are working together to actualise their shared mandate in human capacity development and advancement of Nigeria's oil and gas industry.

At a meeting in September at the Nigerian Content Tower, Yenagoa, the leadership of the two organisations affirmed their institutional resolve to close skill gaps in the industry and work on some other initiatives.

Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary, NCDMB, promised to send candidates to the institute for training. He acknowledged that the oil and gas industry had become technology-driven, urging PTI to keep pace with trends. He agreed with the management of the PTI, led by Dr. Henry A. Adimula, Principal and Chief Executive, that a joint committee should be set up to work out modalities for any collaboration.

Dr. Adimula commended NCDMB for the support it provided towards the institute's plans to establish a research and development centre and the donation of software that aided capacity development. He said the PTI had



Trainees in the commercial air diving training sponsored by the NCDMB at the Navy Underwater Warfare School, Lagos demonstrating their skills.

been working closely with the Oil Producers Trade Section (OPTS), OCTAN, and the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) to establish operational standards for industry-related skills.

The Board's support is being considered in critical areas, such as upgrade of engineering and technical workshops, facilities for virtual learning, staff development programmes and industrial placement for staff and students.

10 young Nigerians undergo cadets training

10 young Nigerians are undergoing Cadet Sea Time Training Programme being organised by the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) and Stoilic Shipping Limited, a renowned maritime training school. The programme provides real-world experience and hands-on instruction aboard international vessels, giving the cadets the practical skills and information required for a successful career in the maritime sector.

The NCDMB held a kick-off ceremony in August. The cadets were scheduled to receive extensive training in various elements of marine operations, safety protocols, navigation techniques, and industry best practices for 12 months. This hands-on learning will prepare them to acquire their Certificate of Competence (COC) and position them to effectively contribute to the sector and make a positive impact on the nation's economy.

Mr. Timbiri Augustine, Manager, Human Capacity Development, NCDMB, said the project started years ago with the training of 20 cadets. Over 76 cadets have been trained so far.

Mr. Lotanna Macfoy, Managing Director of Stoilic Shipping, assured that the

programme would equip the cadets with skills to become the "best version of themselves". He urged them to be determined, regardless of the challenges they would face during the programme.

The Cadet Sea Time Training Programme is a vital aspect of NCDMB's local content development initiatives. It would increase employment prospects and the participation of Nigerians in the international maritime arena. It is also part of NCDMB's enduring investments in the Nigerian maritime sector, which is a key component of the oil and gas industry.

Eight categories of equipment key to oil and gas operations - Committee Report

Eight major equipment categories are essential to oil and gas operations. They occur in various stages of projects life cycle and they take up sizeable portion of the budget. They are pumps, valve, flanges, gaskets, bolts, nuts, metres and instrument fittings. Mr Cyprian Ojum, Chairman of oil and gas industry implementation committee on in-country manufacturing of pumps, valves, flanges, gaskets, bolts, and nuts, listed the tools in July when the committee became a year old.

The committee was set up by Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) in July 2022. Members were drawn from the oil and gas industry and their report was submitted a year later in Abuja.

Ojum said: "These equipment categories come in different uses and specifications and make up a huge integral percentage of capital expenditure (CAPEX) and operational expenditure (OPEX) through the life of the production field, transportation and transformation processes as well as distribution and sales of the products." He noted that periodic inspection and maintenance, shutdowns, and daily production

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operations demand that these equipment categories be repaired or replaced, where necessary, as the cost implication over the years is enormous. Some of the items are sourced off the shelf, while others are designed for specific purposes, hence require long lead time to ship into the country.

Ojum recommended that domiciling in-country manufacturing facilities for the identified components would greatly support operations, improve local content and the national economy. It would also contribute towards growing Nigerian Content performance to 70 percent by 2027 as well as retaining US\$14 million.

Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary, NCDMB, said the Board would soon issue policy directives on in-country manufacturing capabilities of the equipment categories.

NCDMB trains traditional rulers, harps on arbitration, ADR

Members of the Bayelsa State Traditional Rulers Council have undergone a five-day training in Arbitration and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) at the Nigerian Content Tower (NCT), Swali, Yenagoa.

Sponsored by the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB), the training held in October. It was intended to raise awareness about time-tested processes and techniques for the settlement of disputes by means other than through litigation, which is time-consuming and costly. These are particularly desirable with the advent of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA), 2021, and the creation of Host Community Development Trusts (HCDTs).

Engr. Mofe Megbele, Deputy Manager, Stakeholders and Government Relations at NCDMB, said the Board was committed to its mission of developing local content in oil and gas communities and recognised the importance of community engagement. He added that traditional rulers could foster “a

peaceful, an environment conducive for sustainable development by actively engaging with government agencies, private entities and local communities”.

King Bubaraye Dakolo, Agada IV, Chairman, Bayelsa State Traditional Rulers Council, expressed appreciation to the NCDMB for sponsoring the training. He said it would be of immense benefit to the participants, even though arbitration had always been part of the services rendered by traditional rulers in their respective domains.

Aradel set to refine PMS, lauded for corporate governance ethos

Aradel Holdings, a fully integrated indigenous oil and gas firm, has received kudos for instilling the principles of corporate governance in its operations. This has contributed to the company’s growth and sustainability. The company, described as a model for other indigenous producers, was advised to detach itself from its owners in its daily operations.

Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary, Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB), gave the advice in August at the rebranding of Niger Delta Exploration and Production (NDEP) into Aradel Holdings.

He urged Aradel Holdings to champion the development of Nigerian content, stating that the implementation of the policy gave birth to indigenous producers, hence the need for them to support the policy with a view to creating value in the country.

Chief Ladi Jadesimi, chairman of Aradel Holdings, said the company had grown production from its Okpele oil field to 13,000 barrels of crude oil per day from the previous daily production of about 1,000 barrels. The company also pioneered modular refinery initiatives with the first train of 1,000 barrels per day, but has since expanded production to 11,000 barrels per day.

Mr Adegbite Falade, Managing Director of Aradel Holdings announced that the company’s modular refinery would soon begin to refine premium motor spirit alongside other major projects the firm planned to embark on.

Abia begins industrial park, gets tips on low-cost manufacturing

The ongoing development of the Abia Industrial Innovation Park (AIIP), Owaza, in Ukwa West Local Government Area by the state government will spur industrial production and attract national and international investors. This will then contribute significantly to the state and nation’s economy.

The AIIP will comprise a technology innovation centre, a modern vehicle assembly plant, power generating plant, a liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), a manufacturing plant, an LPG and compressed natural gas (CNG) tank farm, a haulage and warehousing facility, an agricultural storage and processing facility, a mini seaport, a five-star hotel, and a carbon-neutral residential estate.

Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary, Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB), lauded the concept at the ground-breaking ceremony in October. He said: “A virile manufacturing sector will not only create much-needed employment opportunities but also have a multiplier effect on the economy, if the right policies and mechanisms are put in place to stimulate forward and backward integration for the products and materials that will be manufactured.”

The Executive Secretary recommended the shared-services strategy, where infrastructure, such as power and other utilities, are provided for businesses that will be located on the site. Such a strategy would reduce production costs and enable manufacturers to focus on their core business, he said. Wabote assured the park management that the NCDMB would share its experiences to make it a success story.

Governor Alex Oti said the goal of the park is to “responsibly harness the abundant oil and gas reserves within Ukwa for the economic development of the communities



Mr. Richard Perry, Managing Director Chevron Nigeria Limited and Chairman of Oil Producers Trade Section; Mr. Patrick Daziba Obah, Director, Corporate Services, NCDMB; Mr. Akintunde Adelana, Director, Monitoring and Evaluation, NCDMB; Mr. Francis Ogaree, Executive Director, Hydrocarbon Processing Plants, Installations and Transportation Infrastructure (HPPITI), Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA); Mr. Adegbite Falade, Managing Director of Aradel Holdings; Mrs. Eret Adams, wife of late founding Chairman of Niger Delta Exploration and Production (NDEP); Chief Ladi Jadesimi, Chairman of Aradel Holdings, and Dr. Layi Fatona, former Managing Director, NDEP, at the rebranding of the Niger Delta Exploration and Production (NDEP) to Aradel Holdings in August.

within the state and the regions connected to this project location”.

Minister seeks timely completion of centre for skills development

Senator Heineken Lokpobiri, Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Oil), has called for the speedy completion of the Centre for Skills Development and Training (CSDT) at Omagwa, Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Lokpobiri spoke after touring the facility in September, in company with Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary, Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB), and Alhaji Aminu Ahmed Galadima, Executive Secretary, Petroleum Technology Development Fund (PTDF).

The centre was at 85 percent completion. The scope and quality of work done were impressive but Lokpobiri expressed displeasure that execution had stalled over variation-related issues and delayed payment.

He said the project was significant, adding that there was need to complete it quickly, to reap the full benefits of the investments put into it. For the centre to be successful, he said, a sustainable management structure would be set up to run the facility at a globally acceptable standard.

The project was initiated by the PTDF to impart skills relevant to oil and gas industry operations. It has been under construction since 2011. It received a much-needed boost with the entry of the NCDMB as co-financier after due negotiations with the PTDF.

Vocations that will be taught at CSDT include automobile works, basic electrical works, basic requirements in Health Safety and Environment (HSE), catering, electronics repairs, masonry, seismic survey technology, welding and fabrication.

Wabote said the NCDMB became involved in the project because of its determination to check the proliferation of vocational centres, which were as many as 250 in Rivers, Bayelsa and Akwa Ibom states, with most of them not functioning even though they had been completed and equipped.

Waltersmith Refinery, NCDMB partner on graduate retraining

A 12-month Nigerian Content Remedial Training Programme for 29 graduates kicked off in September in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. It is focused on general and specialised skill sets that would position the beneficiaries for oil and gas industry operations.

Organised by Waltersmith Refining and Petrochemical Company Limited, in con-



(L-R): Senator Heineken Lokpobiri, Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Oil) and Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary, NCDMB inspecting civil work construction at the NCDMB Gas Hub at Polaku, Bayelsa State during the Minister's tour of the Board's facilities and projects in the state in October.

junction with the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB), the programme introduced the participants to entrepreneurship, health safety at work, information and communication technology (ICT), and engineering materials, under the general skill sets. These are compulsory for all the trainees.

At the kick-off ceremony, Engr. Jeff Tuatuaga, General Manager, Upstream and Monitoring at NCDMB, said human capital development is central to the mandate of the Board. The training, he added, would enable the trainees to secure jobs in the oil and gas industry or become employers of labour.

The general manager said the industry needs skilled manpower and assured that the Board would track their progress and monitor the quality of training. This, he said, would be complemented by a globally recognised certification at the end of the programme. He applauded Waltersmith Refinery and Dexterous Applied Training Institute for conducting the selection process based on personal data extracted from

NCDMB's Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry Content Joint Qualification System (NOGIC JQS).

Mrs. Eriye Onagoruwa, Group Head, External Affairs and Government Relations of Waltersmith, echostressed that “there is a mad hunt for manpower in different sectors of the economy, but beneficiaries must have the required skills”.

'Local Content is Africa's route to economic development'

African oil producing nations must develop local capabilities to process, utilise, and export their natural resources as a means of powering their growth and development, Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary, Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) has said.

Wabote said this at the 2023 Africa Energy Week in October in Cape Town, South Afri-



Members of the Bayelsa State Traditional Rulers Council while undergoing a five-day training in Arbitration and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) at the Nigerian Content Tower (NCT), Swali, Yenagoa.

ca. Engr. Wabote observed that most African nations lacked requisite local capacities in key areas of the oil and industry, such as engineering, procurement, construction and fabrication, installation, commissioning, and operation. This deficiency resulted in the loss of job creation opportunities, revenue, skills acquisition, and other aspects of national development, he said.

Those broad categories of oil industry activities, according to him, take a significant proportion of the oil and gas industry expenditure. Wabote said it was expedient for nations to develop local capabilities that would ensure that those financial outlays are retained in-country.

Advising on the strategy for enhancing local content capacity in African nations, the NCDMB boss underscored the need to make local content a national agenda and back it with the appropriate legislation or legal framework. Other strategies for enhancing local content capacity, he said, include establishing factual data on current capacities in-country and carrying out gap analysis between current realities and the national vision.

There is also a need for structured capacity building interventions to close identified gaps and funding and incentives. The Executive secretary also highlighted the importance of patronising in-country capacities and capabilities, stressing that all policies, capacities, and individuals would become frustrated if they do not receive rewards for sustainability and growth.

500 youths benefit from NCDMB's solar power programme

Five hundred youths in Cross River State have been trained on solar power installation and maintenance, in a programme



(L-R): Mr. Akinyede Stephen, Esq, Deputy Court Registry, Court of Appeal, Port Harcourt Division; Mr. Victor Benibo, Esq, Chairman, Nigeria Bar Association, Port Harcourt Branch; Mr. Patrick Daziba Obah, Director, Corporate Services, Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB); His Lordship, Hon. Justice Simeon Chibuzor Amadi, Rivers State Chief Judge; Ms. Lekoma Sonia, General Manager, Facilities & Logistics Division, NCDMB; Prof. Zacchaeus Adangor, SAN, Hon. Attorney General and Commissioner of Justice, Rivers State; Hon. Justice Anwuri Ken-Chikere (Rtd), Administrator Justice Mary Odili Judicial Institute, Port Harcourt; Mr. Naboth Onyesoh, Esq, Manager, Legal Services, NCDMB, and Mr. Sammie Somiari, SAN, at the NCDMB's sensitization workshop for members of the Bench and the Bar in the Rivers State.

sponsored by the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) as part of its youth empowerment and human capacity building initiatives.

The training was conducted in three locations in the state - Calabar, Bekwarra and Ogoja. It lasted six months, with its closing ceremony held in Calabar in October.

Alhaji Abdulmalik Halilu, Director, Planning, Research and Statistics at the NCDMB, said the Board initiated the training programme to create jobs, generate wealth and empower the youths to contribute to national economy. He noted that technology, skills acquisition in trades and agriculture are some of the high-impact economic sectors.

According to him, the unreliability of electric power is a major challenge affecting citizens' quality of life and the success of business enterprises. Halilu said this informed the clamour for renewable energy solutions to become a major part of the energy mix.

The director harped on the need for youths to position themselves for opportunities in the renewable energy space, particularly because the nation enjoys abundant sunlight. Solar power installation and maintenance training, he said, is an excellent initiative for empowering young people.

Halilu added that the Board has concluded arrangements to register cooperative societies for the group as well as provide shops where they would practise their trades.

NCDMB renovates school at Brass, Bayelsa State

The Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) has renovated a block of classrooms, other structures and facilities at the Community Primary School II, Dikuma-Ama, Okpoama, in Brass Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.



L-R: Mr. Olufemi Olalekan Ogunleye, Executive Vice President of Gas, Power and New Energy, Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited; Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary, NCDMB; Mr. Osagie Okunbor, Managing Director, Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Limited (SPDC) and Country Chair, Shell Companies in Nigeria (SciN); Mr. Isaac Yahah, Director, Finance and Personnel Development, NCDMB and Elohoh Aiboni, Managing Director, Shell Nigeria Exploration and Production Company Limited (SNEPCo) at the 29th Nigerian Economic Summit in Abuja in October.



Officials of the NCDMB with 17 portfolio companies that successfully concluded research- and innovation-based training at NCDMB's Technology Incubation and Innovation Centre (TIIC).

At the handover ceremony in September, Mrs. Angela Okoro, General Manager, Corporate Communications and Zonal Coordination at the NCDMB, said the Board was keen to make internet access readily available to students and to enhance learning and their performance in external as well as computer-based examinations. She urged the school authorities to ensure that the facilities are properly utilised and protected from theft and vandalism. The general manager said personnel of the NCDMB would visit intermittently to assess how the facilities are utilised and maintained.

Mr. Joseph Adebayo, NCDMB's Project Manager, told the students that the centre and facilities had elevated their school to a level comparable to any other institution. He said they were not at any disadvantage due to their geographical location.

The management of the school expressed appreciation to NCDMB for donating the ICT centre, promising to ensure that the facilities serve the intended purpose and ensure their safety.

NCDMB equips 3 schools in Akwa Ibom with ICT centres

Three schools in Akwa Ibom State – Girls High School, Ikot Ibiok; Northern Annang Secondary Commercial School, Utu-Etim-Ekpo and Government Technical College (GTC), Ikot Uko-Ika – have benefitted from state-of-the-art Information and Communication Technology (ICT) centres with dedicated broadband Internet, courtesy of the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB).

For each of the schools is a dedicated block, fully air-conditioned and well-secured with protectors and reinforced metal windows that serve as the ICT Centre. Each centre has 31 desktop computers, 31 purpose-built desks and 31 seats, two stools,

25 solar panels (already installed), two 20kVA inverters with 30 pieces of battery, a 20kVA generator, a server unit, a printer and a scanner, a router and a dish for internet services, and a large smart screen display board.

Mrs. Angela Okoro, General Manager, Corporate Communication and Zonal Coordination, NCDMB, told the management and workers of the schools that the mandate of the Board centred on local capacity development with a deliberate policy to make students familiar with digital tools for learning to enhance their competitiveness. According to her, the policy is meant to stimulate their interest in the sciences and engineering at an early age so that they could pursue careers in those disciplines.

Mrs Okoro explained that the Board was also deliberately promoting science, technology and mathematics (STEM) education in secondary schools across the country to guarantee the development of indigenous manpower to secure the future of the country's oil and gas country.

Industry Skills Council, Occupational Standards Project Inaugurated

The Oil and Gas Sector Skills Council and National Occupational Standards (NOS) Project were inaugurated in November, signaling a new chapter in human cap-

ital development (HCD) for enhanced local content implementation in the hydrocarbons subsector.

The initiatives were recommended by the Education and Training Sector Working Group of the Nigerian Content Consultative Forum (NCCF), an organ of the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB). The pilot NOS project was launched in collaboration with the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), which had developed competency frameworks for other sectors.

Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary of NCDMB, said the idea would ensure constant availability of skilled and competent local workforce for the continued growth and sustainability of Nigeria's oil and gas industry.

This phase covers seven areas of NOS development, namely: Geoscientists (Deepwater Operations), Coded Welders (Fabrication Operations), Instrument Engineers (Fabrication Operations), Divers (Well Servicing/Drilling Operations), 3-D Modelers (EPCI Operations) and additional two earlier submitted by the Petroleum Training Institute, Effurun, Delta State, to the NBTE.

The current framework, according to Wabote, "standardised benchmarks for skills and competencies, ensuring a consistent and high-quality workforce in the oil and gas sector". It also seeks to actively involve industry experts, academic institutions, regulators and other key stakeholders to ensure that the standards align with the specific needs of the oil industry.

The projects are expected to advance skills development and capacity building in the hydrocarbon industry, leading to developing internationally recognised skills.

Software solutions by undergraduates for oil industry launched

A platform where students of higher institutions develop software plug-ins for diverse



Mrs. Angela Okoro, General Manager, Corporate Communication & Zonal Coordination, Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board with senior personnel of the Board and students and management of Northern Annang Secondary Commercial School, Utu-Etim-Ekpo, Akwa Ibom, where the Board donated an Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Centre.

oil field applications has been launched by the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) and SLB, a global technology company. The platform was launched under a joint programme called the NCDMB-SLB Technology Enhancement Programme (N-STEP).

The first three products of this programme were unveiled to industry stakeholders in November in Lagos. It showcased three students each representing the University of Lagos, Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun, and Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi. Their projects highlighted machine learning, artificial intelligence and innovations that could unlock potentials in the Nigerian oil and gas sector.

Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary, NCDMB described the N-STEP programme as an industry-education partnership under NCDMB's *Adopt a Faculty Initiative* for STEM courses to drive collaboration among industry, universities and government through research and innovation, curriculum review, infrastructure, and equipment, as well as learning and knowledge exchange.

"Nigeria spends an estimated US\$400million annually on foreign software, which is a huge drain on our FOREX. We embraced the N-STEP to demonstrate our commitment to reverse this trend. The programme has also targeted undergraduates because we believe Nigerian youths have the innovation drive to be solution providers and not job seekers," said the NCDMB helmsman.

Mr. Sops Ideriah, SLB's Group Managing Director, West Africa, said: "We want to empower software developers to create and deploy plug-ins that extend the utilisation of Exploration and Production (E&P) software platforms. The programme also provides mentorship, internship opportunities, and cutting-edge training tailored to industry needs, empowering future generations of innovators and leaders for the energy industry of tomorrow. Our joint ambition is to cover a minimum of one university in each key region in Nigeria."

Increased crude oil production needed to avert importation for refineries

The Nigerian oil industry must increase the current low crude oil production to avoid a scenario where upcoming and existing refineries in the country begin to import the crude they need to operate.

Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary, Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB), gave the warning at the 41st Annual Conference and Exhibition of the Nigerian Association of Petroleum Explorationists (NAPE) in Lagos.



Alhaji. Abdulmalik Halilu, Director, Planning, Research and Statistics, NCDMB and Mr. Sops Ideriah, Group Managing Director, West Africa, SLB, at the unveiling ceremony of NCDMB-SLB Technology Enhancement Programme (N-STEP) in Lagos.

He decried Nigeria's low production of crude oil and gas despite the abundant reserves, challenging members of the Nigerian Association of Petroleum Explorationists (NAPE) and other industry stakeholders to reverse the situation.

The Executive Secretary said the nation's 37 billion barrels of oil reserves needed close attention, considering the various efforts at revamping the refineries and commissioning of Greenfield refineries. "It will be a sad outcome if we stop the importation of refined petroleum products only to replace it with the importation of crude oil for use in our local refineries," Wabote said.

On gas, the Executive Secretary said Nigeria has about 208 trillion cubic feet (TCF) of proven gas reserves and about 600TCF of unproven reserves. He urged petroleum explorationists to apply their skills and technology towards confirming the recoverable volumes from the unproven reserves and developing the proven reserves.

Project 100 companies undergo ISO management training

Workers from some Project 100 companies held a five-day capacity building workshop in November in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, tagged: *ISO Management Training*.

Alhaji Abdulmalik Halilu, Director of Planning, Research, and Statistics, Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB), said the training was part of the Board's 10-Year Strategic Roadmap, which identified "Technical Capability Development as a major pillar of success" in the industry. He noted that the training would help to shape the organisations in processes necessary to get them ISO-certified.

The director listed the significant achievements of the Project 100 companies in their areas of competency, notably seismic operations, engineering and drilling services, fabrication, marine, and procurement, among others, and the rapid expansion of their businesses to other oil-producing African countries.

He said: "The cornerstone of any reputable organisation is an effective ISO Management System that drives processes internally." Halilu advised partic-

ipants to acquire what their businesses require for continued growth. "We want you to operate in the global space. You must have all the necessary levers that will enable you to compete globally. ISO Management Systems are important tools for supporting competitive organisations," he added.

Halilu said ISO certification was part of the requirements for obtaining Nigerian Content Equipment Certificate from the NCDMB. The director said requisite in-house capacity to drive ISO certification was of utmost importance. He assured the companies, which have since 2019 enjoyed "a series of financial and non-financial interventions" by the NCDMB, that "we'll continue to push you and provide access for you to participate in events" in Africa and elsewhere. Halilu promised that NCDMB would use its leverage with the African Petroleum Producers Organisation (APPO) to create avenues for expansion of their businesses.

Sen. Teslim Folarin lauds NCDMB for solar power programme

Sen. Teslim Kolawole Folarin, former Chairman of the Local Content Committee in the Ninth Senate has commended the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) for training 500 youths in Oyo State on solar power installation and maintenance. The training programme was organised as part of the Board's youth empowerment and human capacity-building initiatives. It was conducted at Ibadan, the Oyo state capital, and it lasted for six months.

Folarin gave the commendation when he participated in the close-out ceremony of the training. He lauded Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary of NCDMB for his dedication to growing local content and building capacity for youths of the country. He said: "If we have about 10 Simbi's in Nigeria, our country will be a better place."



Mrs. Angela Okoro, General Manager, Corporate Communication and Zonal Coordination commissioning an ICT Centre donated by the Board to Community Secondary School, Badeku, Ona Ara Ibadan, Oyo State.

Alhaji Abdulmalik Halilu, Director, Planning, Research and Statistics at the NCDMB, said the Board initiated the programme to create employment opportunities in the country, generate wealth and empower the youths to contribute meaningfully to the economy of the nation. He encouraged Nigerian youths to take advantage of the Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry Joint Qualification System (NOGICJQS). The director said the platform is used to select participants for human capacity-building interventions and employment opportunities whenever they are available.

In her remarks, Mrs. Angela Okoro, General Manager of the Corporate Communication and Zonal Coordination Division said the Board has trained over 16,000 semi-skilled and skilled youths across the country, in furtherance of its Human Capital Development initiatives.

Lokpobiri happy with Waltersmith, NCDMB for improving domestic refining

Waltersmith Petroman Oil Limited and the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) have received special commendations for supporting the Federal Government's agenda of improving domestic refining capacity.

Senator Heineken Lokpobiri, Minister of State for Petroleum (Oil) expressed his delight after he toured the Waltersmith's modular refinery at Ibigwe, Ohaji-Egbema Local Government Area of Imo State in November. He lauded the company and NCDMB for commencing local refining of crude oil and partially meeting the demand of the local market. He said: "The quickest way to fix our energy challenge should be through modular refineries, while we await the total rehabilitation of the big refineries."

The 5,000-barrel per stream day Waltersmith Petroman has been a stable source of diesel, kerosene, naphta, and high fuel oil to Imo State and environs since its com-

missioning in 2020.

Lokpobiri commended NCDMB for taking up equity in Waltersmith Refinery and facilitating the completion of the modular refinery. He urged companies that have been awarded licenses for modular refineries and marginal fields to take a cue from Waltersmith and make deliberate investments.

He said: "If you have a marginal field, an allocation, it is a paper given to you, it doesn't add value to you or to Nigeria unless you take it to the next level by making the requisite investment and then adding the value that is expected. Out of the numerous marginal fields that were allocated, only Waltersmith and a few of them have been successfully driven."

He warned that holders of marginal field allocations without the requisite investments stand the risk of their licenses being cancelled.

NCDMB holds workshops on Expatriate Quota policy

The Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) recently organised a workshop on its Expatriate Quota (EQ) Management System and guid-

ing principles, which are provided by the Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry Content Development (NOGICD) Act, 2010. The stakeholder sensitisation workshops were in Lagos, Port Harcourt and Warri, in November.

The Board stated at the event that the implementation strategy of the EQ Management System was in line with the "mandate to develop indigenous capacity for efficient delivery of services in the oil and gas industry".

Alhaji Abdulmalik Halilu, Director of Planning Research and Statistics at NCDMB, said the implementation of the system is governed by "the overarching objective of leveraging global expertise, honing indigenous skills as well as attracting and protecting investor interest". He explained that the development of indigenous capacity is prioritised, but without discounting the benefits of global expertise, efficiency of service delivery and ability to attract and protect foreign investments in the sector.

He said the yearly sensitisation workshop is "rooted in our commitment to carry stakeholders along as we diligently pursue the implementation of the Board's 10-year Strategic plan targeting 70 percent Nigerian Content by 2027". Appropriate modules illuminating the subject matter were employed at the event.

He assured that going forward, the NCDMB would "leverage the NOGIC-JQS to deepen collaboration with stakeholders" through "deployment of Application Programming Interface (API) for data exchange and information sharing on EQ approvals, marine vessel, and rig records, among others, among Ministries, Departments and Agencies."



(L-R): Mr. Abdulrasaq Isa, Managing Director/President, Waltersmith Group; Mr. Olasupo Olusi, Managing Director, Bank of Industry; Senator Heineken Lokpobiri, Honourable Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Oil) and Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary, Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board, during the Minister's visit to Waltersmith Refinery in Ibigwe, Ohaji-Egbema Local Government Area of Imo State in November.



Senator Heineken Lokpobiri, Honourable Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Oil), and Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary, Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board, listening to the progress report on the PTDF's Centre for Skill Development and Training in Port Harcourt during the Minister's visit to the site to ascertain the level of work in November.

85 trainees graduates from CHARKIN Maritime

Eighty-five young persons have been trained in various industry skills in an intensive three-month programme at CHARKIN Maritime and Offshore Safety Limited, Port Harcourt. The trainings were sponsored by the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB).

Eze (Dr.) Charles K. Wami, Chief Executive Officer, CHARKIN Maritime, thanked the NCDMB for "the show of encouragement, support and solidarity to the company by way of sponsoring Niger Delta youths for this vocational training". He added: "We have a common objective to build quality personnel for the maritime, oil and gas industry. With a partnership like this, we are sure to deliver on our shared objective, building competence in the industry in Nigeria and sub-Saharan Africa."

Engr. Wali Christopher Chika, a facilitator at the programme, said the major skill sets covered were Crane Operation, Forklift Operation, Scaffold, Small Power-driven Craft, Driving, and Industrial Catering. He said the performance of the students was generally excellent through the duration of training.

Dr. Ama Ikuru, Director, Capacity Building Directorate, NCDMB, noted that the training contributed towards the implementation of the first pillar of the Nigerian Content 10-year Strategic Roadmap, which is Technical Capability Development. In the pursuit of that goal, the Board has covered over 16 million manhours in training programmes, with over 17,000 Nigerian beneficiaries trained and certificated in Nigeria and overseas in all critical areas of oil and gas industry operations.

Seplat hosts Women Awesome Network, gets NCDMB's assurance on diversity

Seplat Energy has hosted the 2nd Anniversary of its Women Awesome Network (SWAN). The event was themed *Empowered Women 2030 – A Retrospective*, and has as its goal, providing a platform to reflect on women empowerment by the year 2030.

Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary of the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB), who spoke at the event, assured that the agency will continue to promote diversity and gender-inclusive practices in Nigeria's oil and gas industry. He urged organisations to "implement mentorship programmes, flexible work arrangements, and other initiatives that will address unconscious biases".

He mentioned top political and economic positions around the world, including at Shell Nigeria Exploration and Production Company (SNEPCO), which have experienced and benefitted from the exceptional managerial capabilities of women.

He said the NCDMB makes deliberate efforts to empower and create opportunities for women to achieve their potential. He cited the US\$20million Women in Oil and Gas Fund, managed by the Nigerian Export-Import Bank, as well as the Diversity Sectorial Group under the Nigerian Content Consultative Forum (NCCF), established by the Board as specific initiatives targeted at gender inclusion. There is also a creche at the Board's corporate headquarters in Yenagoa to accommodate the needs of nursing mothers, he added.

Wabote emphasised the imperative of gender sensitivity in the workplace. He encouraged organisations to revise existing policies to ensure they actively promote gender equality.



Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary, NCDMB with Dr. Henry Adimula, Principal of the Petroleum Training Institute (PTI), cutting the exhibition tape at the 3rd Biennial International Conference on Hydrocarbon Science and Technology, in Abuja.



Senator Lokpobiri declares government will provide best investment climate for oil sector

Senator Heineken Lokpobiri, Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Oil) has literally hit the ground running since his assumption of office. In this interview, he highlights the achievements of his ministry and objective of the government for the sector and the economy.

Agenda as Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Oil)

My single agenda is simply to increase the production of crude oil and earn higher revenue for the country from increased production. That is my single agenda. Whatever we need to do to achieve this is what I'm focusing on. I will do whatever is humanly possible to ensure that this is done.

One of the reasons we are lagging behind in our production quota allocated to us by OPEC is because of insecurity. By addressing security problems, we have been able to increase production on a steady basis. At the end of September, we had a production level of 1.1million barrels per day. As at October 11, we were producing 1.34million barrels per day, exclusive of condensate. With condensate, we have about 1.7m barrels. We are already achieving the agenda.

Specific steps to increase crude oil production

The fact that you see production increase did not just happen. It is because of the efforts we have taken, which include the initiative led by the Executive Secretary of NCDMB to shorten the oil industry contracting cycle. We want to see how we can address the concerns of the international oil companies (IOCs). They were complaining that it takes forever to approve contracts. But working together with IOCs, we have been able to develop a homegrown solution by signing a common document. That has been done and unveiled.

We are also trying to rejig the security architecture to achieve better results. We are also engaging the IOCs to give them the requisite confidence to resume investments in the country. One of the reasons they didn't invest in the last few years is because of uncertainty in our regulations. You remember that the Petroleum Industry Bill took over a decade to be passed. Before it was passed, people were not sure what the regulatory and governance structure would be. Now, the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) has been passed and we have harmonised all our petroleum laws into one document. They are beginning to engage. We are assuring them that they have been in Nigeria for over 60 years, they can predict what will happen in Nigeria. There could be tempting offers from other climes, but you can predict what would happen in Nigeria. We're giving them the requisite confidence to invest in Nigeria.

We have a new government and we would do whatever we can to liberalise the investment climate so that they invest more in Nigeria. We are trying to fix security problems so that the Trans-Niger Pipelines from Rivers to Nembe (Bayelsa would also come up. We're losing about 400,000 barrels a day. Yesterday I was happy to hear that the Nembe Creek trunk line would be taking off. All these are results of very deliberate policies that we are implementing. This government is willing to engage and do whatever it can to provide the best in-

My single agenda is simply to increase the production of crude oil and earn higher revenue for the country from increased production. That is my single agenda. Whatever we need to do to achieve this is what I'm focusing on. I will do whatever is humanly possible to ensure that this is done.

vestment climate for this sector.

Strategies to strengthen NCDMB

As Chairman of the NCDMB Governing Council, working together, we will do whatever that is necessary to ensure that we continue to record more achievements. We will prioritise staff welfare, but we need to redouble the achievements of the Board. We will do whatever we can, give them more incentive so they can be more productive.

The mandate of the Board is to develop local capacity. I will visit all the investment sites that NCDMB has committed to so that we will be able to maximise what we expect from those investments. When I resumed, I said I would not stay in the office but would be in the fields. Practically, I am always in the field to see things for myself and solve problems on the ground. We will achieve more milestones, growing more capacity, and providing an environment for capacity building.

The assurance I am giving you is that Mr. President will do whatever he can to ensure that we achieve a lot more than has been achieved in the past in local content. We are happy that Nigerian Content made very strategic investments geared towards creating jobs. We are hoping that local content will help Nigerians to play a lot more prominent roles in the oil and gas sector. A lot of international companies are divesting from onshore and shallow waters to concentrate in the deep offshore. Those assets are available for Nigerians. Many Nigerian companies are already well established because of the capacity building put in place by the NCDMB.

Thoughts on the Nigerian Content Tower and NCDMB performance

I have historical ties with the NCDMB. I was a senator when the Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry Content Development Bill was passed into law in 2010. I was a minister under former President Muhammadu Buhari when the memo for the building was brought to the Fed-

eral Executive Council for approval. This is my first time at the Nigerian Content Tower and it looks like a foreign land. I'm highly impressed. The venues of most international conferences do not look better than the Nigerian Content Tower.

I commend the Executive Secretary and the management for the good maintenance culture. The challenge we often have is that the government builds gigantic structures but after a few years, it is run down. But this building has been in existence for a few years and it is still standing like a new structure. I want you to keep that culture and ensure that this building remains the way it is.

In a special way, I also commend the Executive Secretary and the management of NCDMB for creating a special fund with the Bank of Industry (BoI) to help companies to grow. One of the biggest challenges facing players in the sector is the lack of access to funding. This will help them to create more jobs and build capacities.

How to replicate partnerships between NCDMB and PTDF

The NCDMB is part of the Ministry of Petroleum Resources. Whatever is being achieved here is being achieved by the ministry. We will continue to encourage more partnerships among the agencies in the ministry. I was shocked to hear that the construction of the Centre for Skills Development and Training (CSDT), Port Harcourt, has been going on for over 10 years. My ambition is to see how to complete the project and then develop a framework for putting the place to use, to enable us to maximise the expected benefits. It is a gigantic project. We will complete it as quickly as possible so that Mr. President can commission it. Then, we can use it to train requisite skills required for the oil and gas industry and linkage sectors. With NCDMB and PTDF, we are working on the framework that will put the facility to sustainable use for the benefit of the nation.

DIVESTMENTS in the oil and gas sector IMPACT ON LOCAL CONTENT

Divestments of some oil assets by international operating oil and gas companies and subsequent acquisitions by indigenous firms portend an equal measure of opportunities and landmines requiring deftness for optimum local content and economic sustainability.



One of the topical issues in the Nigerian oil and gas industry today is the ongoing and planned divestments of some onshore and shallow water assets by international operating oil and gas companies (IOCs), as well as the consequent acquisition of the assets by Nigerian independent operating companies. Section 95 of the Petroleum Industry Act (2021) describes such transactions as 'Assignments, Mergers, Transfers, and Acquisitions'. According to the AfricaReport magazine, about 26 oil mining licences have been divested or acquired by oil and gas companies in the Niger Delta Basin in the past decade. This claim was collaborated by Dr. Eyo Eyo, an energy scholar at the University of West of England. He notes in a recent article that Nigeria has witnessed more than £16.6billion worth of divested assets since 2006. He further referenced an analysis by Wood Mackenzie, a British research and consulting firm, which suggests that divestments in Nigeria have amounted to £871million since year 2020.

The headline transactions in the current deals involve Royal Dutch Shell which, in August 2021, engaged Standard Chartered to sell its operated joint venture (JV) licences held by its Nigerian subsidiary - Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) – including a 30 percent interest in 19 oil mining leases (OMLs). The assets, estimated at \$2.2billion, include the company's shallow water and onshore asset interests, plus a 30 percent stake in the SPDC joint venture, which supplies around 10 percent of Nigeria's gas demand. Likewise, ExxonMobil Corporation, in February 2022, commenced moves to transfer some of its shallow water oil and gas assets worth \$1.3billion to Seplat Energy Plc, while Eni announced, in September 2023, the signing of an agreement with Oando Plc for the sale of its subsidiary, Nigerian Agip Oil Company (NAOC), to include the interests in six onshore blocks as well as the power plant in Okpai, Delta State.

None of the referenced transactions has been concluded. They have either been held up by litigations or regulatory bottlenecks. But suffice it to say that the deals would on completion transform Oando and Seplat and any other benefitting entity from mid-sized indigenous players into big-time oil and gas operating companies. In the case of Seplat, the acquisition is primed to increase the company's production by as much as 186 percent.

Energy transition spurring divestments?

These transactions beg the question: Are they linked to the cacophony around energy transition and the pressure on international oil companies to cut back on their investments in fossil fuels and focus on green energy projects? Where would the divestments leave the Nigerian oil and gas industry and the national economy? Let us consider that the sector accounts for nearly 90 percent of the nation's foreign exchange earnings and over 60 percent of the Federal Government's revenue, according to the late scribe of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Dr. Mohammed Barkindo.

Perhaps, the global energy transition, unfavourable and uncertain regulations, and security concerns might be nudging the international oil companies to those decisions. Eyo insists that the vociferous campaigns from several quarters for oil firms to curb emissions and the aggressive targets to reach net zero by 2050 are major contributory factors. Shell's 2020 Sustainability Report supports this view as the oil major stated therein that "divestments are a key part of our efforts to refresh and upgrade our portfolio as we drive towards our target to become a net-zero emissions energy business by 2050, in step with society".

Nonetheless, Dr. Emmanuel Ibe Kachikwu, Nigeria's for-



Mr. Fabrizio Bloomfied, Managing Director, Nigerian Agip Oil Company Limited; Mr. Osagie Okunbor, Managing Director of Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) and Country Chair of Shell Companies in Nigeria (SciN); Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary of NCDMB; Mrs. Oritsemeyiwa A. Eyesan, Executive Vice President Upstream, NNPC Limited; Mr. Shane Harris, Chairman and Managing Director of ExxonMobil's affiliates in Nigeria; Mr. Obi Imemba, Executive Director, Joint Ventures, Total Exploration and Production Nigeria and Mr. Iwueze Cosmas, Director of Joint Ventures for Chevron Nigeria, and at the signing of Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the NNPC and five international oil-producing companies in September on Contracting Cycle Optimisation/ Service level Agreement in September.



mer Minister of State for Petroleum Resources, disagrees. He argues that ongoing divestments are beyond the global push for energy transition, recalling that the IOCs, including Shell and ExxonMobil, divested some of their Nigerian assets in the past few years based on the need to diversify their portfolios.

Whatever the underlying motivations, Engr. Simbi Ke-siye Wabote, Executive Secretary of the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB), counsels that for every divestment to be consummated by an oil and gas firm, another party has concluded an investment, adding: “For whatever the reason adduced to by a party to divest, another party has put together justifications to invest.”

What is evident, nevertheless, is that divestments of oil assets have multidimensional implications for the national economy, Nigerian content development and compliance. They equally affect tax remittances to the government, conducts in international relations, industrial relations, and impact oil-producing communities. Little wonder the technical regulator for the upstream sector, the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC), is being very thorough and unhurried in considering the deals.

Divestments: A run on the Nigerian oil and gas industry?

There have been varied reactions from industry stakeholders over the ongoing divestments of oil assets by international oil companies. One school of thought considers it a negative development and as portraying the country as a hostile environment for international businesses. Proponents of this view blame recurring pipeline vandalism and crude oil theft, security challenges, high cost of operations, and other niggling issues as the underlying reasons for the companies’ exit plans.

A different perspective is that ‘Assignments, Transfers, and Acquisitions’ are positive developments for the industry. Kachikwu surmises that the sale of the assets is beneficial to Nigerian companies and would deepen local participation in the oil and gas space. Wabote echoes this standpoint, stating that divestments are big accomplishments for Nigerian Content development. At a breakfast meeting with members of the Guild of Corporate Online Publishers in October, the NCDMB boss described the divestments as “bold statements that Nigerian indigenous operating companies have come of age and acquired the technical, managerial and financial capabilities to play in the big league.”

Decisions by international oil companies are usually anchored on deep and strategic considerations and calculations with very little room for emotions and na-

Divestments of oil assets have multidimensional implications for the national economy, Nigerian content development and compliance. They equally affect tax remittances to the government, conducts in international relations, industrial relations, and impact oil-producing communities.

tionalistic fervour. Drawing from over 25 years of international career experience with Shell, Wabote reveals that the IOCs are practising the Blue Ocean Strategy, whereby discerning companies exit the Red Ocean environment, which is often characterised by multiple players competing against each other, to concentrate on the Blue Ocean, which represents a niche area where few players operate in tranquility. He contends that “what is currently happening is not a case of IOCs leaving the country; rather, it is portfolio rationalisation. They are leaving for deepwater and ultra-deep waters, which can only be invested in by IOCs because they require deep pockets and very complex technology”.

Beyond the competitive advantage, Wabote indicates that “the international oil companies are equally looking at their Internal Rate of Return (IRR). Once their IRR falls below a certain threshold, they will divest those assets to indigenous players. It is a continuous activity of the IOCs and it happens in the oil and gas industry around the world.”

Still profitable business for the indigenous producers

For persons unfamiliar with the oil industry, the current moves by some IOCs could be misinterpreted as dumping declining fields on desperate, budding Nigerian operators who are eager to operate oil assets after decades of exclusion and domination by the international oil companies. Conversely, available data and recent history confirm that almost all divested oil fields in the Nigerian oil and gas industry have remained prolific and profitable to indigenous operating companies. The reason, as Wabote explains, is that Nigerian firms are nimbler in comparison to their international counterparts and can turn around their assets quickly and make decent profits. In the last decade and a half, Seplat Energy had acquired assets from Shell and grown production from the fields from 20,000 barrels per day (bpd) to 75,000bpd, while Aiteo Eastern Exploration and Production equally grew production from its acquired fields from 30,000bpd to 80,000bpd.

Recounting the successes, Wabote says: “We are proud that we have moved from near zero Nigerian participation in the oil and gas sector to the point that our indigenous operators, such as SEPLAT, AITEO, and others are now responsible for 15 percent of our crude oil production and 60 percent of our domestic gas supply.” He enthused that with the planned acquisitions, “the share of local firms in crude oil production could reach 30 percent or more in a short while”.

It is a no-brainer that divestments, transfers, or acquisitions of oil assets come with several opportunities. In the main, they present an avenue for the capacities and capabilities that have been developed through local content implementation to be utilised in the upstream sector. Senator Heineken Lokpobiri, incumbent Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Oil), believes that indigenous operating companies have been able to step in and fill the spaces being left by the international oil firms, courtesy of the successful implementation of the Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry Content Development (NOGICD) Act in the last 13 years. “Nigerian companies are doing very well today, thanks to the capacity-building

strategies that were institutionalised by the NCDMB in the past years,” he says.

Discussing this subject at the 2023 Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Staff Association (PENGASSAN) Energy and Labour Summit in Abuja in October, the NCDMB boss reeled out several opportunities that come with divestments and the acquisition of oil assets. They include the injection of new capital, the rejuvenation of divested assets and increased crude oil production achieved through investment in technologies. They also create direct and indirect employment opportunities through indigenous companies and their service providers, as well as involve local financial institutions in international loan transactions on the international scale, thereby building their capacity in capital deployment. Similar valuable experiences are gained by professionals in legal services, insurance, government relations, employee relations, community liaison and other support skills.

Avalanche of issues and challenges

Beyond the positives, there is a litany of pitfalls and justifiable apprehension over divestments of oil assets. The most poignant, as identified by the Executive Secretary of NCDMB, is that the acquisition of divested assets by Nigerian operating companies could result in declining Nigerian content compliance and a reduction in tax payments to the different tiers of government from the new owners and operators. Prof Omowumi Iladare, a renowned Petroleum Economist and international scholar, acknowledges this concern in his explainer on the Petroleum Industry Act 2021 and Federation Access to

Petroleum Revenue. He warns that the expectation by the government to collect considerable revenue from the onshore and shallow offshore fields might be forlorn because “empirical evidence suggests that the potential buyers of these assets have a higher propensity for tax avoidance than the previous JV partners”.

Wabote challenges the media and other civil society groups to investigate the pattern of declining tax remittance and Nigerian content compliance once Nigerian companies take over assets from international players. The possible drop-off in tax payments might hurt President Bola Tinubu’s administration, which is banking on tax remittances as a key source of his government’s revenue, having empanelled a special committee headed by Taiwo Oyedele to reform fiscal tax policies.

Wabote’s concern is founded on the Board’s experience and records, which show that indigenous firms, especially the indigenous operating companies, are serial violators of the Nigerian Content Act. He says that “many indigenous companies feel entitled and assume they can get away with non-compliance. Some indigenous firms have also argued that they should be excluded from the implementation of the NOGICD Act since their primary investors are Nigerians.”

Comparing the attitude of the local firms to their international counterparts, Wabote says: “The IOCs will do everything to comply with the provisions of the NOGICD Act, but the indigenous companies will

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do everything to circumvent the law.” He suggests that the indigenous operating companies should be interrogated on the number of Nigerians they employ, their plans for local manufacturing and their compliance levels with the Nigerian Content Act and other laws of the land.

He believes that the provisions of the Nigerian Content cover all entities and all activities connected to the Nigerian oil and gas industry and that no firm is exempted from compliance. The Nigerian economy, he says, will not develop without encouraging local content in key industries, catalysing local production of goods and services and retaining spend in the country, as well as conserving foreign exchange.

Another major challenge associated with divestments or acquisitions is the long gestation period required to get necessary regulatory approvals. A case in point is that the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) has yet to sanction the deal between ExxonMobil and Seplat two years after it was initiated. This is even after former President Muhammadu Buhari had endorsed the divestment and acquisition, before withdrawing his assent upon realising that the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) reposed the authority on the NUPRC. The good news is that Engr. Gbenga Komolafe, the Commission’s Chief Executive, suggested in October 2023 that the transfer of ExxonMobil’s JV assets could be concluded “if the parties engage themselves within Nigerian law and follow due process”.

Other worries that plague divestments of oil assets include interests from political, legal, communities, and labour groups, as well as the potential for the disruption of oil and gas production and job losses. These concerns are already playing out as the employees of the Nigerian Agip Oil Company (NAOC) staged a protest in September, in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, demanding an immediate halt to Oando’s acquisition of the company’s assets, following allegations that the process violated labour laws and could result in the termination of more than 3,000 jobs.

There is also the challenge of access to the latest technology, especially if the new investors lack technical expertise or have no support from original equipment manufacturers. Wabote stresses that “there are also issues around how to manage legacy issues or liabilities related to the environment, communities and other social commitments and pressure on new investors to recoup investments on time to offset loans and address other financial requirements”.

Community issues, corporate governance challenges

Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) issues are known to trail the divestment of oil and gas assets. This is worsened by the fact that most indigenous oil and gas companies suffer from poor corporate governance, a cancer they must deal with, if they are to grow and achieve sustainability, says Wabote. Eyo laments that local companies taking over divested assets have weak environmental oversight. Indeed, the conditions of the local environment have tended to worsen in some areas

where indigenous companies have taken over the operatorship of assets.

A recent example is the November 2021 oil spill in Nembe, Bayelsa State, a field acquired by Aiteo from Shell in 2015. Substantial quantities of crude oil spewed from a leaking wellhead for over a month before an indigenous firm, Kenyon International West Africa Company Limited, curtailed the leak, although it was later determined that the spillage was caused by third-party interference.

Eyo quotes data from the Stakeholder Democracy Network to suggest that Nigerian companies are responsible for 35 percent more oil spills, compared to international companies. “Local oil and gas companies lack the sustainability practices, environmental commitments, and reporting standards that the multi-nationals have, especially in the Niger Delta,” he posits. Closely related is the significant increase in greenhouse gas emissions caused by gas flaring since the acquisition of oil assets by Nigerian companies. There are strong suggestions that Nigerian operating companies flare a lot more gas per barrel of oil extracted than their international counterparts.

It is glaring that more Assignments, Mergers, Transfers, and Acquisitions will be consummated in the Nigerian oil and gas industry in the short, medium and long terms. The way forward, as Malam Mele Kyari, Group Chief Executive Officer of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL), said in 2022, is to make deliberate efforts to ensure that Nigeria does not lose value during the divestments.



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BEYOND COMPLIANCE:

NLNG'S MODEL FOR DEEPENING LOCAL CONTENT AND DIVERSIFICATION

In an unbroken sequence of initiatives and actions since 2017, the Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG) Limited has engaged in fruitful collaborations with the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB). The plan is to go beyond complying with the Nigeria Oil and Gas Industry Content Development (NOGICD) Act, 2010, and engender sustainable value creation and economic diversification for the nation.

The symbiotic relationship started a few months after Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote assumed office as the Executive Secretary of the NCDMB and Engr. Tony Attah, erstwhile Managing Director of the Nigeria LNG was equally new on the saddle. Their paths first crossed when as starry-eyed young men they joined Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) about the same time in 1991.

When fate reunited them in vintage leadership positions, they insisted that the opportunity must translate to real value for their organisations and the country, starting with the signing of the Service Level Agreement (SLA) by the NCDMB and NLNG, the first of its kind in the oil and gas industry, especially between a regulator and a regulated entity.

Pioneering SLAs as a tool to deliver efficiency

Under the SLA, NLNG is expected to submit relevant documents on tendering processes and

Nigerian Content matters to the NCDMB within specified timelines, while the Board is obligated to respond within specified timelines to matters requiring approval. If the Board fails, the NLNG could proceed with its activities or processes for which approval was sought.

Wabote acknowledged at the SLA signing event in June 2017 that NLNG's operations were time-sensitive. He said the agreement would ensure that "NLNG is not exposed to Nigerian Content violations and NCDMB is not a blocker to the business". The Executive Secretary said the SLA was a key strategy for shortening the contracting cycle, cutting the cost of projects, and improving compliance with the Nigerian Content Act.

Buoyed by the success of the SLA, all international oil companies (IOCs) under the Oil Producers Trade Section (OPTS) and their indigenous counterparts, the Independent Petroleum Producers Group (IPPG), soon signed the SLA and are currently enjoying such benefits as shortened contracting cycle and reduced costs of projects.

In September 2023, the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL) and five international oil-producing companies completed the cycle by signing the SLA. This has become expedient because of Nigeria's urgent efforts to increase crude oil production and enhance revenue from crude oil sales. Leveraging the SLA, NCDMB ensured the speedy

approval of the NLNG Train 7 project during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, paving the way for the contract award and actual commencement of construction.

Even the change in the leadership of the NLNG in July 2021 did not weaken the relationship with the NCDMB. In August 2022, Dr. Philip Mshelbila, who replaced Attah as the Managing Director of Nigeria LNG, led his management team to visit the Executive Secretary at the Nigerian Content Tower, Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. He announced plans to take the relationship beyond complying with the provisions of the NOGICD Act. The reason, he said, was because "NLNG has a vision not just to be a globally competitive LNG business but to help build a better Nigeria. To do that we have to work closely with the NCDMB and raise our partnership to a new level, and that includes human development, research, and other areas".

The meeting in Yenagoa gave birth to the Technical Working Group (TWG) comprising nominees from both organisations to drive closer collaboration on projects, ensure compliance with Nigerian Content obligations and promote other strategic alliances for the good of the nation's economy.

The terms of reference of the TWG are, among other things, to "act as a first-level discussion and escalation group to review and unblock thorny issues or delays arising from Nigerian Content compliance on contracts and projects that have been unable to reach satisfactory resolution at the operational/officer level," and to "provide opportunities for proactive and strategic engagements with the Board for insights and advice on key programmes/projects and strategic contracts".

The third TWG meeting, held at the Nigerian Content Towers (NCT) on October 7, 2023, addressed issues around Energy Transition, Executive Summary Report on NLNG Train-7, E-Marketplace Module, NLNG Human Capital Development Implementation, NLNG/NCDMB Service Level Agreement Performance Review, and Factors Affecting Commercial Evaluation Delays.

The General Manager, External Relations,

NLNG, Andy Odeh, announced that deliberations “were very successful”. According to him, the group meets “to look at issues that border around enabling the business where there are challenges so that those issues don’t become crises that begin to distort the business we do in NLNG: It could be NLNG is not giving enough information as it should or it could be that NCDMB is not moving as fast as they should, either with approvals or proposals that we have”.

Collaboration, rather than adversarial, delivers (more) benefits

The next major engagement with the NCDMB was a one-day workshop with the theme: *NLNG Local Content Strategy: Beyond Compliance, in Port Harcourt on October 20. “Beyond Compliance,”* as explained by the NLNG officials, focused on “how do we get local contractors to have capacity? How we can we get partnerships for Nigerian companies and ensure that they get these jobs; looking into the future, developing enough capacities as new technologies and Train 7 emerge. It also means Safety Mode, adhering to regulations adequately; so, there is zero exposure to companies, no legal issues with the NOGICD Act, and zero non-compliance sanctions from NCDMB”.

As part of its collaborative efforts in building the capacity of local vendors and patronising them, the NLNG engaged Project 100 Companies nurtured by the NCDMB and included them in the vendor list for the ongoing Train-7 project.

The most recent initiative of the NLNG in its collaboration with the NCDMB was a three-day Nigerian Content Stakeholders’ Retreat, with the theme: *Deepening Industry Partnerships Beyond Compliance*, at Finima, Bonny Island, the company’s operational base in Rivers

State. The forum provided a platform for the NLNG and NCDMB helmsmen to sign an agreement on the Oil and Gas E-Market Place, which would see the rollout of tender opportunities from the gas company on the E-Market electronic platform, thereby implementing a key provision of the Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry Content Development (NOGICD) Act. The E-Market is also expected to increase transparency in the tender process, remove human interference in business processes, move things electronically, and achieve better results.

Mshelbila stressed that “we cannot have a better Nigeria unless we develop the capacities of Nigerians”. He provided updates on the Train-7 project and other aspects of the company’s operations. He also thanked Wabote for his personal commitment to the US\$5-billion Train-7 project, which ensured the timely consummation of the Final Investment Decision (FID) and take-off, despite the ravaging COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

The Nigerian Content Plan for Train 7 provides that 50 percent of the entire operations would be executed locally through Nigerian oil and gas service companies and would benefit the local economy immensely. The MD said: “We had to bring the Executive Secretary to the project site for him to have first-hand information on the scope of execution, which is now at 52 percent, and with over 8,300 Nigerians engaged thus far.”

A member of the Governing Board of the NLNG, Dr. Rabi Suleiman, also thanked Engr. Wabote for effective support. He urged the Executive Secretary to continue as the NLNG sought third party gas suppliers to up its capacity utilisation. “I call on Nigeria to continue to support NLNG to be the gas company of choice,” Suleiman said, adding: “I am sure NLNG can do a lot more.”

In his remarks, the Executive Secretary expressed satisfaction with the accomplishments of the NLNG so far, noting that the company has moved from a phase at inception when expatriates constituted over 90 percent of its management team to the current phase where the entire management comprised Nigerians. He said it was part of the success of the Nigerian Content journey in the industry. The Executive Secretary said NLNG had built a track record of success, which made it the first company to sign the SLA with the NCDMB, which has become the template for the entire oil and gas industry. The company’s record of excellence is equally the reason the Board decided to start the E-Marketplace with it, he added.

The NCDMB boss pledged support towards addressing operational difficulties facing the NLNG, including approving third-party gas injections and sanctioning new deepwater gas projects to enhance the performance of Trains 1 to 6 and provide adequate gas for Train 7, when completed.

The Nigerian Content Stakeholders Retreat featured other activities, such as a visit to the Train 7 construction site, town hall/panel session, golf invitational tournament, and Nigerian Content appreciation night.

The NCDMB/NLNG model of collaboration is good evidence that the regulator and operator relationship must not be adversarial to achieve value. It is obviously yielding benefits for the Nigerian economy and worthy of emulation by other international and indigenous operating oil and gas companies.

- **Dianam Dakolo**

Engr. Paul Zuhumben, Advisor, Projects Certification and Authorisation, Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) (4th left); Mr. Andy Odeh, General Manager, External Relations and Sustainable Development, Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas Limited (1st left); Engr. Dagogo Buowa, Manager, Nigerian Content Development (2nd left) and other NLNG officials at the NCDMB/NLNG Technical Working Group meeting at the Nigerian Content Tower (NCT), Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.



NLNG-NCDMB LEADERSHIP RETREAT FINIMA, BONNY, RIVERS STATE





WHY HOLDING ON TO YOUR CASH IS SUDDENLY A SOUND INVESTMENT

The conventional wisdom in personal finance has long been to invest your money, let it work to generate returns and grow your wealth. Therefore, people have invested in real estate, stocks, commodities, bonds, paintings, and other assets to grow their wealth over time. However, recent economic uncertainties and unprecedented events may have rendered this age-old wisdom unsound strategy; suddenly, cash is regaining its kingship.

The global economy has received some battering lately leading to stunted growth. It started with the deadly coronavirus pandemic, which led to the total shutdown of economic and social activities worldwide. The pandemic was barely out when Ukraine and Russia went to war, resulting in food and energy crises. Then, there is the Israeli-Hamas war. These shocks have led to production drops, surging inflation, debt tightening, and rising interest rates. The economic outlook remains uncertain.

Early this year, two financial institutions in the United States of America went bust, blindsiding the authorities. Silicon Valley Bank and New York's Signature Bank simply collapsed with seemingly no distress signs. In Switzerland, the second biggest bank, Credit Suisse, was going under before it was rescued by UBS. Central bankers across the globe have been raising interest rates in an unprecedented manner, which, according to the IMF's Global Financial Stability Report, is beginning to "expose fault lines in the financial system".

In Nigeria, rising national debts, falling national and household incomes, double-digit inflation and interest rates, fuel subsidy removal, and the highly volatile exchange rate regime have left the economy in a precarious position. Suddenly, amid these uncertainties, holding on to your cash as a

safe haven seems like a smart choice. It shields your wealth from market fluctuations, ensuring that you can access your funds without the risk of losing principal. In this environment, having liquidity or cash is an asset in itself. The U.S Country Financial Security Index showed that 71 percent of Americans are likely to keep cash on hand during this period. The same can be said of Nigerians.

Holding on to cash provides the flexibility to take advantage of opportunities that may arise during periods of economic uncertainty. According to financial experts, having cash reserves allows you to make strategic investments when others are financially constrained. This can lead to potentially significant returns when the market stabilises and asset values recover.

Mr. Ambrose Omordion says he will not blame those who want to hold on to their cash, considering the current economic realities. Different people have different investment goals. For some, the key objective is wealth growth, while others prioritise wealth preservation and liquidity.

One often overlooked aspect of holding cash is the psychological benefit it provides. In a world where financial markets can create significant stress, having cash on hand offers peace of mind. You know that your funds are readily available for emergencies, unexpected expenses, or unforeseen opportunities, without the need to liquidate investments.

While holding cash may seem wise, financial experts have cautioned that excess cash at hand may bring its own difficulties, in terms of storage, overspending, unwanted attention, depreciation, and so on. Advice: Put your cash in highly liquid assets. The opportunity to keep your money close by and still enjoy some appreciation, the experts say, should be the key objective.

High-yield savings accounts

Many financial institutions offer high-yield savings accounts that provide better interest rates compared to the traditional savings accounts. While these rates

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may not outpace inflation, they offer a reasonable return while maintaining liquidity.

Short-term fixed deposit

This provides a higher interest rate than the standard savings accounts and offers a fixed return over a specified period, typically ranging from three months to five years. It provides a more secure way to earn interest on your cash without long-term commitment.

Laddering

It is a strategy where you split your cash into different investments with staggered maturity dates. This approach ensures that a portion of your cash is readily accessible, while the rest earns higher returns with longer maturities, allowing for flexibility and liquidity.

Emergency fund

Building an emergency fund is a sound financial practice. Having three to six months' worth of living expenses saved in a liquid account can provide peace of mind and financial stability.

With the current economic uncertainties, market volatility, interest rate hikes, and inflation concerns, holding on to cash may be a prudent investment strategy.

ADAEZE IFEOMA ATUEGWU

Nigeria's most prolific young writer



A gathering was already at the Lagos Race Course by the evening of 30 September 1960. The mood was the liveliest you could find, and it was all because the next 24 hours held so much significance - a country Nigeria would emerge after about half a century under British control. Out of this came a consciousness that was made into a picture through storytelling and the writers who needed to make it an act.

Then came the novelist, Chinua Achebe who carved out an opening that future Nigerian creatives can burrow through when debuting with *Things Fall Apart* on 17 June 1958. In the future, Nigerian-American novelist, Adaeze Ifeoma Atuegwu was waiting dutifully – she was to be painting a vision for children through their books.

Now, up to three decades have passed since Atuegwu bled her first blood as a writer. Back in 1994, she was a 17-year-old exiting secondary school education and growing up in Enugu in the south-east of Nigeria when *Fate*, her debut work, was published. It opened the floodgate that continued a chain that the late Chinua Achebe already started, where future generations, through the past works of those who preceded them have found a voice. Interestingly, *Fate* was printed by Fourth Dimension Publishers.

In the subsequent months between 1994 and the following year, the literary scene reveled in the lingering moment of buzz that came along with adulation. Wrapping up the end of an empowering 20th Century, the image of Atuegwu at 17 portraying a grooming of romance was truly a novelty. Such curiosity greeted other works that were to follow in under eight months of the debut: *Tears*, *Chalet 9*, *The Magic Leaf*, *The Adventures of Nnanna*, *Bina Series* (five books), and the *Lizzy Series* (six books).

All these were the interesting beginnings that were to precede the author's enormously influential shaping of the world through a focus on minorities comprising people living with disabilities who the visually impaired. That had to be the burden that would follow the

status of the youngest bestselling author in Nigeria. Although we have had female pop culture icons who are writers, no personality has outmatched Atuegwu at 17.

For Atuegwu who is now 46 years old, a lifelong cord was struck at an early age due to her keen interest in literature and publishing, and she was also attracted to the screens. "Growing up, I was obsessed with writing and directing plays/drama. Part of me wanted to be a movie director but the better part of me wanted to be a writer. I'm glad I chose the latter," the voice of the novelist echoes through a post on Facebook page.

"I wrote *My Husband's Mistress* at 17 - my teen mind playing around with societal issues of marriage and the role of women within the institution of marriage. In this play with a cast of 10 characters, a young wife is distressed by her husband's infidelity. She struggles to follow societal norms of acceptance of his behavior since she knows better. *My Husband's Mistress* has been used as text material in several Theatre Art departments of many colleges/universities in Nigeria.

Atuegwu received the Rotary International Club Award for Creativity (1994); after this was the Award for Fostering Child Development (1995), and Award for Excellence in Writing (1996). All these point to great achievements- the young Miss Atuegwu was becoming sort of a legend, and she was inspiring the world around her, whether through the printed texts of a publisher, via sound, or the pointy dots of Braille.

Wrapping up the end of an empowering 20th Century, the image of Atuegwu at 17 portraying a grooming of romance was truly a novelty.

If the author were to be lying under a microscope, it is likely to reveal a special calling to bring stability into the world. In her universe, the visually impaired will have a community to groom them for a profitable journey on this earth. Her Bina Series had a part to play in birthing the Bina Foundation for People with Special Needs. It is a non-profit born out of the desire to ensure sustainability and expansion of assistance to target beneficiaries.

The stigmatised, the marginalized, and the neglected have benefited from this enterprise which is strictly the brainchild of a children's writer destined to prove a point that was pretty much new around the mid-nineties. Through Adaeze Ifeoma Atuegwu, a motion picture of the Nigerian segment of the world was on display. She was the main act in this, a light came through her, which made it clear that a limitless mind, even though young, can heal the world.





The Splinter in the Sky

-Kemi Ashing-Giwa

This one is a United States of America’s *Today* bestseller and it is woven around a political theme.

It is a wide-surface lens hovering over the life of a young tea expert, Enitan, beginning her cycle as a political prisoner and then a spy snooping on government officials. This position, which empowers her to redeem emancipation for her people, is how the story goes.

For that to happen means to enter a much-focused style of dissent while under incarceration. This was the reality that the captive had to live to hit her targets. The objective was to spy on the high-ranking officials in government and retrieve her sister who was being held by an army authority. Here in the novel was author Kemi Ashing-Giwa prompting a plot that mirrors a state of great power and rule by a handful. The Holy Vaalbaran Empire and the Ominirish Republic are showing that.

Sci-fi fans will find their moments in this latest work. They will be chaperoned by Enitan, who apparently has so much to do with the readers adding to her checklist of things to do.



House Woman

-Adorah Nworah

The change is happening but it is not fast enough. Not in Adorah Nworah’s latest novel *House Woman* at least. The reader would have entered a mystery thriller getting into this. One that returns to women being straightjacketed in their marriages. The goings-on in the physical world can testify to the continuity.

It is supposed to be everything going according to plan. Ikemefuna, a young dancer in Lagos, will visit Texas in the United States of America to be with her new husband. Relocating is surrounded by a number of positive prospects: one is getting hitched to closely a hard ten, a ground for an academic pursuit, and the mundane things in America. With these, all will be well and she is going to make a great supporter.

But all is not well when she moves. There is pressure to have children, hardly ever having access to any freedom, and there is so much grease working around a web of family. Most of Ikemefuna’s inner musing is asking the question: where to go from here? Nworah has a crack at gathering up the answers. The journey with the author will, however, show other sides with the new bride having huge secrets of her own.



Forged by Blood

-Ehigbor Okosun

Nigerian folklore and magic find a way into Ehigbor Okosun’s *Forged by Blood*. In this book, the world seems to be locked in the hatred of a brutish king who resents the use of magic. But to stop it is to revise the origin of a people and spirituality, which cannot be achieved even for a monarch. He would be confronted with a choice to make, which could make him reconsider his stance as the voices in demonstrations gang up against him.

All the strict values attempt to make an enclosure around one of the characters, Dèmi who has to contend with staving off suspicion about her magical powers by the ordinary people of her society who are driven by the plainness of their being.

Forged by Blood, published by Harper Voyage is Okosun’s first novel preceding planned doubles already in the works. The writer follows Dèmi to revisit Yoruba mythology and the scenes of her bravery – like when she kidnaps the crown prince of the Ife Kingdom to facilitate freedom for her mates. Every success recorded is all thanks to the forging of new alliances. It is left to the reader to see events unfolding in real-time when they get on this.





1. Mrs. Angela Okoro, General Manager, Corporate Communication & Zonal Coordination, NCDMB with senior personnel of the Board and students at the commissioning and handing over of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Centre donated by the Board to Community Secondary School, Angalabiri, Sagbama Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

2. Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary, Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board, Directors of NCDMB and representatives of international oil and gas companies cutting the cake to celebrate the commissioning of MG VOWGAS' newly installed 200-tonne heat treatment furnace and state-of-the-art dish head forming machine at the company's yard in Port Harcourt, Rivers State in October.

3. Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary, Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board with Mr. Osagie Okunbor, Managing Director, Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Limited (SPDC) and Country Chair, Shell Companies in Nigeria (SCIN) at the 29th Nigerian Economic Summit in Abuja.

4. **Capacity Building:** Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary, Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board with officers of the Nigerian Navy after the close-out ceremony of the Commercial Air Diving Training for 20 Nigerian youths at the Underwater Warfare School, Navy Town, Ojo, Lagos State.

5. Cross-section of 500 youths trained on solar power installation and maintenance in Calabar, Cross Rivers State.

6. L-R: Mrs. Angela Okoro, General Manager, Corporate Communications and Zonal Coordination, Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) (2nd on the front row); Ms. Maureen Chigbo, President, Guild of Corporate Online Publishers (GOCOP); Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary, Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB); senior personnel of NCDMB's Corporate Communications & Zonal Coordination Division and the Executive of GOCOP at the breakfast meeting organised by the Board for members of the Guild in Abuja in October.

7. Engr. Jefferson Tuatongha, General Manager, Upstream Monitoring, Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) with some management and staff of NCDMB, and stakeholders of the oil and gas industry at the sensitisation workshop organised by the Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate on the new Monitoring and Evaluation Reporting Template in Lagos.

8. Mr. Yusuf Alli, Editor, Northern Operations, Nations Newspaper; Mrs. Angela Okoro, General Manager Corporate Communications and Zonal Coordination, Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB); Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary, NCDMB; Mr. Azu Ishiekwena, Group Managing Director, Leadership Newspapers, senior personnel of NCDMB's Corporate Communications & Zonal Coordination Division and Editors of national newspapers and Directors of broadcast stations during the breakfast meeting organised by the Board in Abuja for the management cadre of the media.



9. Chief Jude Nwagbo, Managing Director, Airblast Nigeria Limited, conducting Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary, NCDMB and representatives of international oil and gas companies during the facility tour of Airblast Nigeria Limited yard in Port Harcourt, November.

11. Mr. Akintunde Adelana, Director, Monitoring and Evaluation, Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) with members of the discussion panel on Day 1 of the Develop Ondo 2.0 Investment Summit, in Akure, July.

13. L-R: His Excellency Dr Omar Farouk Ibrahim, Secretary General, African Petroleum Producer Organisation (APPO); Major-General Barry Ndiomu (rtd), Interim Administrator, Presidential Amnesty Programme (PAP); Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary, NCDMB; Mr. Moses Siasia, Chairman/CEO, Mosilo Group and Editor-in-chief, Heritage Times Magazine (4th left), Mrs. Siasia; Hajiya Hafsat Kolere Buni, wife of Governor of Yobe State and chief Joseph Penawou, CEO, First Marine Engineering Services at the launch of the AfriHeritage magazine in Abuja, October.

15. Engr. Dokubo Obongo, Deputy Manager, Capacity Building Directorate, Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) with officials and Chief of Okpoama community performing the commissioning of the rehabilitated and upgraded building of the Community Primary School 2, in Okpoama, Brass LGA, Bayelsa State

10. Alhaji Abdulmalik Halilu, Director, Planning Research and Statistics, Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB); Ms. Iniobong Udoh, Manager, British High Commission, Port Harcourt; Mr. Alfred Fortune, Political Officer, British High Commission; Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary, NCDMB; Mr. Hamish Tye, Second Political Secretary, British High Commission in Nigeria, and Dr. Matthew Ayibakuro, Governance Adviser, during a courtesy visit of the British High Commission to the Nigerian Content Tower in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, September.

12. Mr Esueme Dan Kikile, Manager, Corporate Communication Division, NCDMB with the 10 finalists of the 7th Annual NCDMB National Undergraduate Essay Competition Award and Prize giving ceremony in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.

14. Senior personnel of the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) and Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas Limited after the 3rd NCDMB/NLNG Technical Working Group (TWG) meeting at the Nigerian Content Tower (NCT), Yenagoa, Bayelsa State in October.

16. 4th from Right: Alhaji Abdulmalik Halilu, Director, Planning Research and Statistics, Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB); Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary, NCDMB; Professor Steve Azaiki and other guests after the visit of the Executive Secretary to the Azaiki Foundation & Public Library in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State in September.



NCDMB'S ROLE IN MARITIME IS HIGHLY COMMENDABLE

As one of the founding fathers of the Ship Owners Association of Nigeria and an advocate of local content, how would you assess the journey to improve indigenous participation in your sector?

I would argue that the journey to improve indigenous participation in the marine and shipping industry has been better since NCDMB was established. NCDMB came as a godsend because before her arrival, foreigners took all the opportunities. But with her constant championing of the drive for local content, many opportunities concerning the marine and shipping industry have been domesticated, which is a great thing because shipping is an essential factor in Nigeria's economy.

What are some of the major initiatives that you've pursued as president of the Ship Owners Association of Nigeria?

My two-term tenure as President of the Ship Owners Association has been a basketful of activities. I first started by identifying the fact that we needed to let people see us and know who we are.

My first initiative with my exco and other ship owners was to organise the first Lagos International Shipping Expo, which attracted about 15 ship-owning countries, including China, The Netherlands, Denmark, Finland, Britain, and Singapore, just to name a few in attendance.

We had a three-day conference sometime in November 2019, and it was very successful. We exposed ourselves to international ship-owners, their shipbuilders, and people who would be able to hold our hands. Unfortunately, COVID-19 came in 2020 and everything died down. Regardless, we went further to work with NCDMB to move the interests of ship owners and we talked about rate reviews and optimal cost optimisation. We also cooperated with the IOCs to drop our prices up to 40 percent and our daily rates went down to less than 40 percent, to ensure that the industry survives.

Dr. Mkgorge Onyung, Chief Visionary Officer of Jevkon Oil and Gas Limited, who also doubles as President of the Ship Owners Association of Nigeria, is impressed by the role of the Board in driving growth in the maritime sector with NCDMB's recent intervention in crude oil lifting as an excellent example.

Following that, we had to look inward and see how we were doing as ship owners. So, we began to advocate at the National Assembly level when we noticed that nearly 350 cargoes came in six months with imports and no Nigerian ship was involved. We had to write a petition to the National Assembly, the House of Representatives, precisely, and, of course, the Minister for Petroleum. It was eventually decided that Nigerian ship-owners should be given a chance.

There have been efforts in the last few years by NNPC and NCDMB to include indigenous ship owners in crude oil lifting. How has that fared?

We noticed that the tender documentation was faulty; so, ship owners through the efforts of NCDMB, wrote to NNPC, and NNPC was able to change the wording for the requirements for the tender to include that indigenous ship owners and products must be lifted by proper agreements with indigenous ships, which was highly commendable.

The passage of the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) is expected to unlock investments in the Nigerian oil and gas industry. In what way would the PIA benefit indigenous ship owners?

The PIA is a highly commendable Act that has come into existence. It was long overdue. The best time was a couple of years ago, but the next best time is

now, and we are glad it has come.

There is really not much in terms of the benefits to ship owners, apart from the fact that they will increase trade and, of course, ships will be able to function. But, specifically, the best thing that PIA did was to unbundle the NNPC because NNPC was too large to be controlled by the government. With this PIA and NNPC being a limited liability company, it gives it room to breathe.

Now specifically speaking, I think NCDMB benefited most from the PIA in the sense that it liberated NCDMB to be able to act fully in its capacity as a very strong regulatory body of government to enforce local content.

The Ship Owner's Association of Nigeria earlier announced an arrangement to keep onboard slots for cadets seeking to get certificates of competence. How far has this gone and how many persons have benefited from the arrangement?

It is true that when I came into the saddle as President of the Ship Owners' Association in 2019, the first initiative was to train 59 cadets from Maritime Academy. That



Dr. Mkgorge Onyung
Chief Visionary Officer of Jevkon Oil and Gas

was a wonderful initiative. We were able to train quite a good number of them even though it had teething problems initially. That programme is still on, and some of our ship-owning companies are also working directly with maritime institutions to train our seafarers.

As someone who has been involved in the industry for decades, what are the areas you would want NCDMB and NIMASA to focus on to further build local content in the Marine Science Centre?

I have identified the problem in the maritime and shipping industry to be one thing: lack of knowledge. So, first, NCDMB and NIMASA will have to work hard in the area of knowledge, which is like training people to be in that space, especially seafarers and the seafaring programme. In addition, the current training programme has to be overhauled because there is no use in training 3,000 seafarers and there are only 50 ships. It's like training a medical doctor and you cannot go to a hospital and do housemanship. Within two years everything is forgotten and the professional becomes ill-suited to the profession.

We noticed that the tender documentation was faulty; so, ship owners through the efforts of NCDMB, wrote to NNPC, and NNPC was able to change the wording for the requirements for the tender to include that indigenous ship owners and products must be lifted by proper agreements with indigenous ships, which was highly commendable.

Also, I will advise NCDMB and NIMASA to get more ships and take shipping seriously. This is because Nigeria is bounded by 840 nautical miles of waterfront, and the inland waterways are almost another 12,000 nautical miles. We have water and about 26 states in Nigeria are bounded by water. You can't move there without ships. The only way to get into this space is to have ships.

It is important to invest in the acquisition of ships: the building of ships, and, of course, shipping. This is because shipping is a US\$24trillion global business. By my calculation, that's about \$64 billion a day; about \$30 million an hour. It's something which we must get into.

You turned 70 a few days ago. What are some of the high points of your experience in the oil and gas industry?

Well, in the oil and gas industry, my high points mostly surround the present and they are seeing the growth Nigeria has made in the oil and gas industry. I see Dangote, the refinery coming in, which is an opportunity; the PIA coming in, which is going to unlock a lot of opportunities in the oil and gas sector and, of course, seeing the rise of alternative energy.



Mr. Jacob Idungafa
MD Fairtex Group

FROM PROJECT 100 TO A MULTINATIONAL

Fairtex now operates in 6 African countries

Fairtex Services qualifies as the poster child for the African Petroleum Producers Organisation (APPO) and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which are championing free movement of local capacity and cooperation among African nations to ensure local content development and improvement in the continental economy. Mr. Jacob Idungafa, MD Fairtex Group, shares how he established the firm in six African Countries and how the Nigerian Content Act provided the bridge.

Early beginnings in Nigeria

We started business in Nigeria as Fairtex Integrated Services Limited, but we changed the name recently to Fairtex Nigeria Limited because of the global nature of our brand. Today, we have branches in some other countries: we have Fairtex Ghana Limited, Fairtex Ivory Coast Limited, Fairtex Mozambique, Fairtex Uganda, and Fairtex Angola, that is upcoming. We were able to make this much progress because of the solutions we developed over a period.

Fairtex is about 21 years old in the oil and gas business in Nigeria, and we have offered a lot of services, supply chain services, engineering, operation and maintenance, turnkey solutions, and more to international oil companies (IOCs). That gave us experiences in the products and services that we offer. We built local capacity because NCDMB gave us the platform. We felt that since we have been able to develop, we can transfer these solutions and technology to our brothers in other African countries, where they may not have those solutions and innovative ideas.

How we set up our branch in Ghana and found a local partner

Our first port of entry was Ghana. We had to go through the local compliance and identify ourselves with the appropriate authority to get all the necessary licences to set up the company. Today, Fairtex has been fully set up in Ghana.

One of the challenges in entering a new country could be in identifying a local partner. We have a good strategy for identi-

flying local partners. We were able to sell our ideas to the local partners. We sold our solutions, the innovative technology we were bringing to be part of the oil and gas business in their country. On that basis, it became interesting for the company to be our partner. That was how we reached some levels of agreement.

The most important thing is having set objectives and goals as well as knowing where you are heading to. Wherever we meet new partners in different countries, the first thing we share with them is our visions, our goals, our objectives, why we are coming into their country, and what would be their benefits. The capacity that we are building from Nigeria; how we can also transfer this same capacity to them. I make sure that the partner in each country owns part of Fairtex in their country.

For instance, in Ghana, according to the local content law, about 10 percent ownership must be owned by the Ghanaian partner. But I told my partner that I didn't want to benchmark with the Local Content Law. I told him that I wanted him to own a substantial stake in the business, so that it would impact his life. At the end of the day, he owns 30 percent of the shares in Ghana; same thing in all other countries. This is what we do. If we were not able to build local capacity here in Nigeria, there wouldn't be any capacity to extend to other parts of Africa country.

Challenges of visa and language and how to overcome them

There are challenges in trying to set up companies across other African countries. In some countries outside the ECOWAS region, there could be visa issues. There is also the language barrier in some countries. Going to Mozambique, they speak

Portuguese; same thing with Angola. But what we do is to identify our first entry point: who would be our partner? How can we make use of him to create an enabling environment for us to have a soft landing to offer our services? And because we have given the partner a position in the company, he would not see himself as being a boy to us or as being just a partner to earn a commission. We make them owners of this company. They take full benefits and responsibility, thereby committing themselves and providing all the support that we need locally for us to offer our services.

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How NCDMB's support compelled the IOCs to open their doors

I thank the NCDMB, most importantly the Project 100 Initiative, of which Fairtex is among the beneficiaries, for giving us a platform to build capacity through the environment they created. One of the things I admire is that the NCDMB is not just creating an environment to favour you, they also set standards and guidelines. They set out the criteria to assess you and build you to be able to meet the industry standard and requirements.

I remember in our first project we had with Total Energies at FSO Unity. Local companies never used to deliver those services. Before then, companies like Ponticelli and Saipem were the kinds Total Energies used to award contracts to, to execute projects there. But when the Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry Content Development (NOGICD) Act and NCDMB came into existence, they started advocating for Nigerians to participate. I got the first contract. I was one of the Nigerians who had the first contract to be mobilised to FSO Unity to offer down-graded spools, which comprised various hydrocarbon pipes and a lot of flammable pipes.

When we mobilised to site, it was like a war. Total Energies refused to give us work permit to commence our project. We had a lot deliberations to demonstrate that we could actually do the job. To be honest, we had not executed such a job before; it was the first offshore job that we won with Total Energies. Eventually, we were able to execute the job and we delivered it successfully.

Today, I cannot count the number of critical projects we have delivered for Total Energies. We are one of the companies that Total Energies can count on because an opportunity was created for us by the NCDMB, which compelled the IOCs to accept us by giving us the opportunity.





Hybrid workplace will keep evolving in 2024

Some employers have attempted to reverse the trend. It may be here to stay.

Folusho Phillips, Chairman of Phillips Consulting Limited, speaking early this year at a public relations function on the new work culture post-COVID-19, said the workplace model has been turned on its head. According to him, home is now the new workplace while the office is now the fun, play, socialising place.

He could not have put the new reality better. From remote work during the coronavirus pandemic to a mixture of remote and on-site workplaces, tagged hybrid, the workplace has truly witnessed significant transformation. However, as in-office and remote work continue to coexist, understanding how to optimise productivity in this new paradigm remains a crucial conversation between both employees and employers.

Emmanuel Asika, Country Head at HP Nigeria, said: "The fact is that the future of work is hybrid, and it is here to stay. We just have to find the best way to make it work for organisations, employers, and employees." While Asika's assertion may be true, some organisations are beginning to insist on going back to the old in-person model of work as the COVID-19 fears and panic continue to wane. For instance, sometime last year, Elon Musk insisted that his Tesla workers resume to their offices daily, with failure to comply attracting stiff penalties.

For all that it is worth, the hybrid work model is expected to remain pervasive globally, including in Nigeria, even in 2024 because of the huge benefits it offers both the employer and the employee. A Microsoft 2022 Work Trend Index Report showed that 57 percent of remote employees are considering a switch to hybrid working models in the years ahead.

In 2024, the hybrid workplace will be further refined, offering a multitude of benefits, including reduced commute times, enhanced work-life balance, and the potential for cost savings for employers. The key drivers of the continued adoption of the hybrid work model in Nigeria will remain the harsh economic realities; intractable inflation and exchange rate volatility, the rising costs of petroleum products, and the *japa* syndrome.

With a hybrid workplace, however, one thing that will never go away is the issue of productivity. Questions such as what consti-

tutes productivity, and how to enhance or measure it will continue to define the relationship between the employee and the employer and may well constitute a strain, if not well defined and understood by both parties.

To maximise productivity in the evolving hybrid workplace of 2024, both employees and employers need to embrace certain best practices, according to experts. They include:

Clear Communication: Effective communication is essential for keeping remote and in-office employees on the same page. Organisations would need to establish clear channels for communication, ensure regular team meetings, and encourage open dialogue.

Flexible Work Hours: Flexibility in work hours can be empowering, allowing employees to work during their most productive times. Organisations should focus on results rather than strict work hours.

Goal-Oriented Work: Encourage employees to set clear goals and prioritise tasks. Structured routines and time management techniques are essential for productivity.

Training and Skill Development: Continuous learning and development opportunities are vital to ensure employees can use the latest technologies and tools for maximum productivity.

Smart Use of Technology: Technology must be leveraged to streamline processes and boost productivity. Advanced project management tools, virtual reality collaboration, and artificial intelligence-driven task automation can help teams work more efficiently.

It is clear that the hybrid workplace may not go away anytime soon as it is a dynamic shift in how we approach work. In fact, according to Ogugua Belonwu, founder of *MyJobMag*, "Going forward, I see forward-looking companies adopting a hybrid approach to work, where employees are allowed to work from anywhere- home or office."

However, businesses can maximise productivity in this new era by embracing innovative technology and enhanced flexibility, and a commitment to the employees' well-being. As the world of work continues to evolve, it is essential to adapt, experiment, and learn from the experiences of employees to create a productive and harmonious hybrid workplace that benefits both individuals and the organisations they serve. In the current environment, productivity is defined more by the quality of work done and the wellbeing of employees and less by the number of hours spent in the office.



Nigerian Oil and Gas Park Scheme (NOGaPS)

Catalysing In-Country Oil and Gas Equipment Components Manufacturing

Open for Business

Emeyal 1, Bayelsa | Odukpani, Cross River

Under Construction

Ikwe-Onna, Akwa Ibom | Oguta, Imo | Ughelli, Delta | Ilaje, Ondo | Benin, Edo | Owaza, Abia

• Some Features of NOGAPS



Power Station



Warehouse (1,300 m²)



Shop floors (Available area ranges from 1,200 m² to 3,600 m²)



Water



Access roads



Plot size (ranges from 5,088 m² to 13,320 m²)

www.ncdmb.gov.ng



Amazon Energy is a Nigerian Content success story

David Olayinka Oluwatimehin, CEO of Amazon Energy shares the broad range of the company's activities and plans, and how Local Content implementation has changed the landscape positively.

Overview of Amazon Energy

Amazon Energy commenced full operations on June 16, 2000. We are an integrated energy services provider across the entire oil and gas value chain. We started by providing engineering services, design engineering services. Ten years after, we upgraded our management systems to be able to provide Engineering, Procurement and Construction services (EPC). Currently, we provide turnkey EPC services. Our operations span three divisions: the Services Group is our core divi-

sion; we also have the Trading and Shipping, as well as New Ventures.

The Trading and Shipping Division is the channel through which we participate in the downstream sector – trading crude, condensate and gas. It is not normal to find a company operating in both upstream and downstream. But our chairman, Mr. Trevor Akindele, had his background in trading and he introduced the trading flair within the company. But it makes sense because of the challenges of the protracted contracting cycle in the oil and gas industry. In the past, it took 24 months

or longer between the conceptual stage of a project to award. Many companies, like Amazon, suffered significantly, having to wait because it affected the sustainability of companies.

From the early stages, the chairman advised on the need to have diversified income sources that are not dependent on the vagaries of the contracting dynamics. Our trading business, which is young and only commenced in 2015, has played a significant role in helping us to balance the portfolio.

We trade in NNPC crude, condensate and gas, and we have been active since 2016.

In 2016 and 2017, we partnered an international shipping company to provide services to NNPC and NIDAS Shipping Services. Through that arrangement, we transported

two million barrels of crude oil for the NNPC between Escravos Terminal to the Warri Jetty at a time the pipelines were bad. That was the only way NNPC could get crude to Kaduna refinery because crude is pumped from Warri to Kaduna. Through one of our subsidiaries, FTPL, we mobilised a mother vessel, and three shuttle vessels and four gunboats. This operation lasted 55 days at less than half the cost of what was spent on the project previously. It was a success.

We also have our New Ventures Division. It is the unit through which we leverage our core competencies in design, build, operate, and maintain, to bring commercial viability to projects. Here, we actively embrace risks. It is the vehicle and division through which we pursue project development initiatives, which is where the future lies; this is where we see the future of the company. We do not describe ourselves as mere contractors but as services providers because we provide services at different stages of the value chain.

Amazon Energy Group and Nigerian Content Development

You cannot speak of the successes we have made as a company without speaking about Local Content. It dates back to when Engr. Sam Akin Adetunji was Group General Manager of National Petroleum Investment Management Services (NAPIMS) in early 2001, which was the inception of Amazon Energy. Then, local content was just an idea that was being discussed. All the International Oil Companies (IOCs) would submit a shortlist of their projects to NAPIMS. After a while, the IOCs started demanding that local service companies should pay fees, ranging from ₦150,000 to ₦500,000, depending on the size of the project, to be included on the shortlist; that is, to buy the form, to be shortlisted.

Then, our company had two staff. Their monthly salary was a fraction of these payments. I couldn't pay their salaries. So, how can our company pay ₦150,000 every other week? So, we wrote to NAPIMS and attached several of these advertisements and made a case that it defeated the purpose of trying to promote indigenous companies, if it was monetised, and that people like us would never be able to participate. Engr. Adetunji, of blessed memory, reacted and

the shortlist was cancelled. That was the last time IOCs charged money for shortlisting.

Amazon Energy grew on the back of Nigerian Content. We are a Nigerian Content success story. Since the advent of the NCDMB to the present day, Amazon, like several other companies, have succeeded immensely and this speaks to the success of the Nigerian Content initiative. This success laid the groundwork for the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) and ongoing efforts of the Board.

Current projects of Amazon Energy

We are primarily a design engineering contractor. We are renowned for providing design engineering services, much more than as an EPC contractor. Engineering is the bedrock of any successful project. Hence, we decided to maintain a strong engineering organisation and provide support to projects, even when we are not the EPC contractor.

We continue to offer engineering services to ExxonMobil. We have a contract running with the company for over 21 years. We have an engineering services agreement. We have done engineering back-to-back for ExxonMobil and we are providing engineering work for the company through a major contractor. On the EPC side, we recently completed a fire water tank for the Nigerian Gas Marketing Limited at one of their locations. We recently signed a contract to demolish and reconstruct a fire water tank under the Warri Refinery Turnaround. We are completing a major project for the Nigerian Agip Oil Company (NAOC/ENI) at their Kwale facility where we have designed and built four compressors - two atmospheric compressors and two low pressure compressors. We have designed the facility to flare down 20 million standard cubic feet of gas daily. The project was awarded in 2016 and it has gone on for a while for different reasons.

In between, we completed for NAOC an 18.5-kilometre, 24-inch gas pipeline project, taking gas from Kwale to Akari and connecting the Obi-

afu-Obrikom-Oben Gas Pipeline. That project was a huge success. From the first design on paper to the golden weld, it was concluded in four and a half months. NAOC began to realise the success and began to flow gas and generate revenue. This speaks to our execution philosophy.

Amazon Energy is an execution-focused company. We say we execute to quality standards, providing creative solutions with integrity and teamwork. We call that EXQCIT. This speaks to our core values. We want to be known as that company that will help you deliver on your project objectives. We are not just engineers and constructors; we are solutions-oriented. We like to take your project, think it through from the design phase, and help you through completion. Our strength as a turnkey contractor lies in the quality and strength of our engineers.

Many projects fail in the construction phase because of poor engineering. But because engineering is our core competence, it helps us in the delivery. Projects, by their nature, always have challenges. IOCs and indigenous independent oil companies all understand projects. But the reason they turn it to service companies to execute is because they want somebody else to take the headache. It is not in the lack of engineering or technical knowledge; it is in the ability to take the challenges and manage them effectively.

Projects fail not just because of a lack of technical capability but also out of the lack of proper organisation and management. This has been our focus right from the early days. Rather than just invest in equipment and assets, we invest more in people, processes and procedures because we try to underpin what we conceive as our value proposition to the industry – execution and delivery.

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As a company, we prioritise on-the-job training. Our HR division facilitates specific capacity development initiatives for our staff. In addition, Amazon Energy has had a long-standing relationship with NCDMB. We have taken trainees from NCDMB over the years, sometimes 10 or 15 persons. We must have retrained around 30 to 40 NCDMB graduates that have passed through our organisation. We have had some interesting successes.

Challenges facing Amazon Energy

The predominant challenge facing Amazon Energy and most contractors in our industry is related to finances. Nigerian banks do understand contracting and their structures are not organised to support projects. They are more inclined towards trading and commercial businesses. The banks continue to offer us facilities that do not suit us; facilities that are not structured in a manner that support the dynamics of projects. The fundamentals of projects are cost, time, and resources. Everything impacts schedule and that impacts cost and resources. That is why several projects exceed budget or fail. The interest rates are punitive. Some Nigerian companies try to be creative and borrow outside the market. In many cases, some local companies that are brand-focused try to complete their projects, while some other firms abandon projects altogether.

Amazon and the Nigerian Content Intervention Fund

Amazon Energy has benefitted from the NCI Fund and we appreciate the efforts of the NCDMB. We accessed US\$10million through the Fund managed by the Bank of Industries. This is a single digit facility with a one-year moratorium and a repayment period of five years. This significantly impacted the dynamics of the financial framework of our project.

Amazon Energy and the vision for energy transition

We established Amazon Energy's New Ventures Division in 2007. In 2006, I attended a project finance course in England, to understand what it takes to finance projects, because we long envisioned that a time would come when the industry would require alternative financing to do projects. At that time, the government was beginning to struggle to finance cash calls and the banks did not understand the financial requirements for

projects. How then do you attract funding to project opportunities?

The big investors are risk averse. My decision to attend the project finance course was to understand how to persuade the financiers, to speak their language and convince them to commit their funds into our trust. If you take away the technological, technical, environmental, and local risks, and the project becomes viable, and they will put their money. We have invested, over the years, in asset ownership, not because we aim to become an exploration and production (E&P) company; rather, we went after opportunities that give us the latitude to leverage our core competencies in design, build, operate and maintain.

In the gas sector, we actively participated in initiatives, like the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) bid for flare gas commercialization, and we are in discussions with some producers to commercialise their flare gas and turn it into products like LPG and CNG and others. In essence, we are fully committed to harnessing the opportunities in this initiative.

Amazon Energy's Human Capacity Development Initiative

In the early days, before the advent of local content, the IOCs would not approve your project team if you did not have a minimum of 25 to 30 percent expatriate workers. That is because they believed that Nigerians did not have the experience. You needed to have lead positions filled by expatriates, like Project Manager and Project Controls. They would only approve Nigerian engineers in the sub-roles. We have moved from the scenario where we used to keep two to three guest houses for our expatriates to the point where we have one expatriate and he is not even a project person. He is our commercial manager and he has been with us for 12 years. We have moved from the position where we used to have 10 to 15 expatriates, depending on the project commitments, to almost not having any expatriate in our team. To achieve this, it has taken dedicated training and capacity development.

As a company, we prioritise on-the-job training. Our HR division facilitates specific capacity development initiatives for our staff. In addition, Amazon Energy has had a long-standing relationship with NCDMB. We have taken trainees from NCDMB over the years, sometimes 10 or 15 persons. We must have retrained around 30 to 40 NCDMB graduates that have passed through our organisation. We have had some interesting successes.

I recall a moment when I was waiting at Total Energy's reception area, just before going into a meeting and five of my engineers walked up to me. That illustrates the contribution we have made to just one organisation. One of them first came to our company for his industrial attachment and returned for his national youth service. He was retained as an instrumentation engineer. In his third year, he started doing the work of a senior. By the time he had done five years with

us, he was working as a Lead. Of course, we could not keep him. Total Energy recruited him. This is just one example of our success stories in human capacity development.

Our organisation has contributed immensely to the Nigerian oil and gas industry and we continue to imbibe the culture of training and capacity development.

Core values of Amazon and the future of the company

We have five core values, some of which are execution, creativity, and teamwork. Teamwork is what I am trying to engender more in the organisation. We are a 24-year-old company. It is one thing to do business and make money, it is something else to grow a company. To grow a company means you have to entrench processes. Dealing with human beings is difficult in any climate. You need to carry out trainings and retraining and you will be losing people. So, you need to continue the cycle.

We will continue to do this because we have a big vision and this connects to our five-year plan. We have always envisioned to reduce our dependence on third party contracting through our New Ventures Division. We are hoping to mature some of the opportunities in gas commercialisation. We hope that this will keep our teams busy. We are participating in either self-developed projects or others that we are partnering other people where our value proposition is to bring our engineering and construction capabilities to bear as part of our contribution.

Secondly, we want to be able to deliver engineered products to the market. We do not want to just do engineering or EPC. We want to provide the clients with engineered products, either in modules or packages, in process, mechanical or electrical instrumentation, e-houses. We intend to develop a facility to achieve this.

The third is that we intend to do process facilities training in-country and we have already commenced discussions with the NCDMB about this plan. We intend to encourage the IOCs to send their staff there for training.

What's your advice to the NCDMB on how the agency could better serve the industry and stakeholders?

Simbi Wabote has done a fantastic job at the NCDMB. He has taken what he met to the next level. NCDMB is working. The management is thinking and impacting the industry. We encourage the executive to continue to do what they are doing. NCDMB has become a catalyst for the development of mini-refineries and industrial parks. Before then, the funds were sitting in the bank. It makes sense. I salute the organisation for what it is doing.

MG Vowgas raises the industrialisation bar with the only automated heat-treatment furnace in Africa

Mr. Godwin Odohokpa Izomor, Managing Director of MG Vowgas Group, lends insights into the company's recent commissioning of a cutting-edge equipment and the future of Nigerian Content.



Motivation for the company to acquire a 200-tonne heat-treatment furnace and dish head forming machine

When you are in business, operating in the oil and gas industry, you will always try to find a competitive advantage. There are some fabrication companies in Nigeria, but only about two or three have capacity. None of them has this type of furnace.

Energy Works Technology (EWT) used to have a furnace, but theirs packed up. Today, MG Vowgas is the only company that owns an automated heat-treatment furnace in Nigeria and the whole of Africa. Our is not just the automated, it's the largest. Before now, EWT had an 80 tonnes furnace, but today, we own a 200 tonnes furnace. And ours does not require human involvement. It is a completely computerised system.

How MG Vowgas grew remarkably in the last five years

Three years out of the last five years were heavily affected by COVID-19. Within that

period, the industry experienced a slowdown. The industry is just picking up this year. Technically, in the last five years, there have not been major projects. I can only ascribe our growth to God and discipline. We have also had dedicated, disciplined and well-trained workers.

How MG Vowgas builds staff capacity

We train and retrain. The only problem we have in the industry is that when you finish training, another company will poach your staff. Among the people we have trained, only a few of them are still available. But that will not stop us. We have applied a new method. We train the trainer. If we really want to achieve the technology growth in Nigeria and in the industry we're operating in, we must train the trainer. This is because it's expensive in our industry to train. If you send one person to the United States today, you will be spending about US\$25,000 on training fee. Then you have ticket and accommodation costs. At the end of the day, you could be spending close to \$40,000 to \$45,000 on one person. So, what do we do? You have to train the trainer. You can spend that money on training one or two persons. When they come back, they will transfer the knowledge and technology to others. That is why

we have a training school here. Our training school gives us opportunity so that when the trainer comes back, he will transfer the knowledge to others.

Competitive advantage of MG Vowgas over other fabrication yards in Nigeria

The edge we have is that we are building our capacity based on technology. We are not competing with anybody, but we are the only Nigerian-owned fabrication yard. All others are owned by foreigners – Saipem, Daewoo, Samsung. Even some of the names that you hear might sound like Nigerian companies, but they are foreign companies. Because of local content, they changed their names and their boards. But they are still run by foreigners. We are the only company that was built from scratch to this level; no foreign support. This is a 100 percent local company, and we will continue to build our technological capacity because that is the only way.

I made it clear at the Practical Nigerian Content conference at Uyo in 2022 that if we really want to industrialise as a nation, we have to be intentional in building capacity

There is no way you can be industrialised without fabrication companies. We are the bedrock for industrialisation. Majority of the facility, majority of the equipment, whether crane or machinery, are all fabricated. If we really want to industrialise as a nation, we must have at least two big fabrication companies that would be wholly owned by Nigerians

and technology in Nigeria. There is no way you can be industrialised without fabrication companies. We are the bedrock for industrialisation. Majority of the facility, majority of the equipment, whether crane or machinery, are all fabricated. If we really want to industrialise as a nation, we must have at least two big fabrication companies that would be wholly owned by Nigerians, that can support Nigeria in terms of retaining foreign exchange in-country and make sure that they trade and support the Nigerian economy.

I saw in one of President Bola Tinubu's programmes that he believes in steel. That is one of the things that I've been crying for over the years, that if we are serious about industrialisation, we must not joke with steel rolling mills and the aluminum smelting plant at Ikot Abasi, Akwa Ibom State. We need steel and aluminum to be able to create in-country capacity to develop our fabrication capacity.

Major projects executed by MG Vowgas in the past years

We have worked on a lot of projects. We have done a revamp for a gas project, changing all the major valves and cleaning them.

We have done major oil pipeline for Chevron, for NAOC, and for indigenous companies, like AITEO. We have done sectional pipeline replacement for Nigerian Gas Company. We have done various projects in the oil and gas industry.

Diversification in the oil and gas industry

The oil and gas industry is vast, and we are just operating in one aspect of it. But we have acquired land in Bonny to build an LPG storage facility; we are building 20 tonnes LPG facility in Bonny. We are currently doing Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and soil test on the land. Before the end of this year, we are going to start something.

Exploring opportunities outside Nigeria

It is a challenge we would have loved to take, but we want to consolidate in-country first. Let's continue to build our capacity in-country. Maybe in the next few years, we may consider that. If I have the resources, I would rather invest in steel production because it's a major opportunity.

Projection for the next 10 years

In another 10 years, will be over 60 years and maybe I would have retired. But we are building capacity and the company is not built around me. I only manage the finance and the business development. Every department runs itself, no interference. I only oversee what they do because there must be control in every aspect and there must be control over the service we offer. We must have control of the personnel going to work so that they can come back home safely. We recently celebrated two million man-hours without any fatality. It's because of our core values, which is safety. In the oil and gas industry, safety is an integral part of it. If we have to succeed, safety must be an integral part of our business. We believe in people going to work, whether offshore, on land, or even inside the office, or their homes. We want them to always leave safely. We have a responsibility that we owe ourselves, the responsibility to be alive and to work for Nigeria.

The Role of NCDMB in the success of MG Vowgas

NCDMB is fantastic. The Executive Secretary has proven to the whole world that Nigeria can be a fortress; that a Nigeria can be disciplined and incorruptible. The man has proven to the world that something good can come out of Nigeria. He changed the direction of local content. We will not be talking about the success of MG Vowgas if the Local Content policy was not in place. But it's one thing to have the law, it's another thing to have somebody that has passion to drive that law through. That is what the Executive Secretary, Engr Simbi Wabote, has done.

I am bothered every day about his tenure that is elapsing. Who is that man that is going to take over? It bothers me a lot because you need capacity. You must have capacity for you to be able to achieve what that man has achieved in a short period of time.

Today, the fear of local content is the beginning of wisdom in the oil and gas industry because somebody stood on his feet to say that we must do it right. We are talking of progress; it's not because we got contracts but because he was able to stand firm that companies must execute work in-country. The International Oil Companies (IOC) have no choice but to look inward and by looking inward, that is what we are benefiting from.

My advice to the Nigeria Government is that if Simbi's (Simbi Wabote, Executive Secretary, NCDMB) tenure expires, we must look for somebody that is credible that can take over the mantle of leadership; someone that can increase the standard, not to diminish the standard. I give it to him and I thank him for believing in Nigeria. It's because you must believe in Nigeria for you to stand on your feet. A lot of blackmail came, but he still stood on his feet. And God will keep him forever.

MG Vowgas 200-tonnes heat treatment furnace and dish head forming machine.

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN VOCATIONAL HUB NCDMB funded world-class facility is delivering on expectations

Though Nigeria is a country endowed with a massive youthful population, a large segment of this does not fully possess the skills needed to be gainfully employed, or, indeed, create jobs by working for themselves. This is exacerbated by massive numbers of young people migrating for better opportunities but end up doing menial jobs because of their skills level.

The Nigerian Content Development Monitoring Board (NCDMB) has put in place several initiatives to plug the skills gap in the country. One of the major programmes is the inauguration of a multi-million naira vocational training institute at the University of Ibadan in Oyo State. The objective was simple enough: it was to cultivate a generation of skilled workers who can meet the demands that are apparent in diverse sectors of the economy. At the inauguration, Senator Teslim Folarin, the legislator representing Oyo Central Senatorial Zone and Chairman of the Senate Committee on Local Content, enthused: "I am excited about the number of Oyo State indigenes that will be equipped and will eventually get employed as a result of this huge innovation. I am delighted to have helped in facilitating it."

The readiness that the NCDMB has been anticipating is building up gradually. Those who have been to the hub have testified that they recorded tremendous improvement and were prepared to join a modern workforce. Some, after their schooling, will be entrepreneurs who will not wait for jobs to be provided for them.

An advocacy to improve local content development caters to existing shortages that are evident in different sectors. NCDMB has been at the forefront of proposing solutions and initiatives to plug Nigeria's skills gap. Engineer Simbi Wabote, Executive Secretary of NCDMB, has been preaching about a need to close any gap through targeted policies. "This is an important milestone in Nigerian content development. The University of Ibadan, an institution renowned for academic success, is encouraged to kick-start the much-needed Nigerian Industrial Revolution and justify the Board's huge investment by maximising the project in the best interest of youths from this community and beyond," the NCDMB boss said while handing over the facility to the Vice Chancellor of the university, Prof Kayode Adebowale.

His comments and those of other dignitaries at the event were evident that expectations were high. A year on since the University of Ibadan Vocational Hub was inaugurated, there is no question that expectations have been met.

Dr. Temidayo Omoniyi, Director of the Vocational Hub, who is from the Wood Products and Biomaterials Engineering Department, gave an insight into some of the programmes that have been held at the Hub.

"The facility has been integral to the training of a significant number of staff of the Faculty of Technology, University of Ibadan. As you know, the success of any facility, which in this case is the vocational hub, is largely hinged on the quality and expertise of the staff members as they are expected, among other things, to provide high-quality instructions and guidance to students and other beneficiaries."

Corroborating this statement was the coordina-

tor of the training programme, Dr. N. A. Adewole who is also a specialist in Wood Product Engineering.

"The first facet of training is teaching," he said, while reaching into a box to grab a small book containing the schedule of programmes used during the training. "The teaching component of the training programme emphasises innovative pedagogical techniques and effective classroom management strategies. Beneficiaries learnt how to design engaging and interactive lessons that foster critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

"In the research aspect," he said, "the beneficiaries were guided on the nitty-gritty of conducting relevant and impactful research that addresses the challenges of various industries. They learnt about the latest research methodologies, tools, and techniques in their respective fields. They were encouraged to collaborate with industries and experts to ensure their research remains relevant and has practical implications. This aspect of the training aligns with the vocational hub's goal of promoting research that leads to tangible solutions and innovations."

And the conversation heads to assisting local communities in addressing their peculiar issues related to development. The hub has proven to be an instrument in championing this towards the realisation of the set goals. It has also devised learning sessions to spread knowledge among the participants.

The community has been the biggest beneficiary. "The community service element of the training programme focused on con-



necting the faculty with the local community and industry partners,” said Dr Adewole. Commenting on the impact of the training, he said: “Beneficiaries learnt how to identify community needs and develop projects that contribute to the socio-economic development of the local Ibadan community. And initiatives such as workshops and seminars that share expertise with the broader community were at the forefront of the communiting. This aligns with the vocational hub’s goal of creating a mutually beneficial relationship between the university and the community it serves.”

Expectations met

A beneficiary of the training programme, David Adeniran, noted that the vocational hub presents even further prospects beyond the three areas expounded by Dr. Adewole. The hub, according to him, is critical for meeting the demands of changing times and technological advancement sweeping across the world.

“The training programme meets the 1989 UNESCO Convention description of vocational education and training as a learning environment that combines in-classroom learning with experiential and practical learning at the workshop. A big take-home from the training programme was the focus on the simultaneous utilisation of nascent technology and contemporary pedagogical methodologies. Focus group discussions on research methodologies, which cut across effectiveness as university lecturers, ethics in research, grant writing, construction of proposals, and other rich aspects of academia were brought to the table.”

What intrigued David beyond the foregoing was a tour of the facility, which further exposed the trainees to the cutting-edge machinery and technology housed in the hub. “The CNC Lathe Turning Machine, for instance, works fascinatingly,” he said, eager to explain the intricacies of the equipment.

Now, the searchlight beams to where Omiyinka, a third-year Mechanical Engineering student, is viewing from. He noted that the prospect of the vocational hub was incredibly exciting. Recounting the experience, he admitted: “The hi-tech equipment provided in the hub presents a golden opportunity to bridge the gap between theory and hands-on experience.”

Part of his tour exposed him to “learn about complex machinery and components in our courses, but having access to advanced equipment in the hub means I can see how these components function in real life”. He added: “This practical exposure will undoubtedly enhance my understanding and make me a more competent engineer.” According to him, this no doubt chimes with the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board; this is what the agency has envisioned.

The readiness that the NCDMB has been an-



icipating is building up gradually. Those who have been to the hub have testified that they recorded tremendous improvement and were prepared to join a modern workforce. Some, after their schooling, will be entrepreneurs who will not wait for jobs to be provided for them.

A fourth-year Industrial and Production Engineering student, Akintunde, is walking this line, it appears. “The industrial and production engineering field demands a strong grasp of manufacturing processes and efficient production techniques. The vocational hub’s provision of cutting-edge machinery offers me a chance to experience these techniques hands-on. One of the key benefits of this hands-on experience is the ability to understand the nuances of optimising production lines and improving efficiency. By working with the hub’s hi-tech equipment, I can experiment with various scenarios, evaluate different strategies and witness immediate outcomes. I believe that the vocational hub will not only enhance my technical skills but also instil a sense of adaptability and creativity. When I enter the workforce, I’ll be already familiar with the kind of technology used in modern manufacturing setups. This will not only boost my confidence as a student but also make me a valuable asset to potential employers,” he said.

Worries remain

While the hub has lived up to the standards expected of it, with so much more to be delivered in the future, a significant challenge threatens the effective utilisation of the facility.

“The university is grateful to the NCDMB for providing the vocational hub and a 500 kVA diesel generator as its power source. However, the economic realities of the country and the high price of diesel are a constant source of worry,” said Dr. Omoniyi. “Many of our planned programmes have had to be postponed until we can find a cheaper power source,” he added.

This has made the director to picture an alternate energy source, like renewables. “At this point, we are keen on finding an alternative yet viable power source. What we have in mind is connecting the hub to the national grid so that heavy machinery can be powered at little cost, and providing renewable energy like solar power for light equipment and a backup power source. This will bolster our ability to adequately unlock the potentials of the university and local communities through skilling, re-skilling, and up-skilling.”

Ayotomiwa Elesho contributed this piece from the University of Ibadan in Oyo State, where he is a student.

R&D investments paying off as NCDMB incubate start-ups deliver unique solutions

The Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) has produced 17 high-potential start-ups through its Technology Incubation and Innovation Centre (TIIC) for active participation in oil and gas industry operations. This is among the Board's efforts to strengthen the local supply chain in the industry.

In the seven-month incubation structured to meet the Board's objective of commercialisation of research and innovation and in line with its product development framework, the start-ups had the additional benefit of exposure to mentorship-driven accelerators. They received business-enabling programmes offered by the participation of Founder Institute (FI), Abuja, the Nigerian Chapter of California-based Silicon Valley in the United States.

The new portfolio companies represent the latest in a line of capacity-building initiatives of the Board, which has, since 2010, delivered over 15 million training manhours, with 2,000 to 3,000 youths empowered yearly with skills in building technology, industrial automation and mechatronics, refrigerating maintenance, mobile phone repairs, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), seafaring, hospitality as well as software development, in partnership with the Industrial Training Fund (ITF) and other reputable training organisations. All the trainees got starter packs and, in many cases, seed money.

The 17 start-ups, also called incubates or founders, tailored their own research and innovation towards a multiplicity of fields largely in the energy sub-sector: drilling fluids additives, embedded systems, pipeline protection technology, pipeline monitoring systems, artificial intelligence, gas penetration technology, oil and gas design and modelling systems, among others, as well as data management, local materials substitution, safety and environment and tele-medicine.

They successfully moved from ideas to business case development with above-average performance at the intervening stages of concept development, product validation, field trials, and patenting processes, among others. They also developed prototypes of their innovations, indicating that they are now in a position to attract investors as equity holders in

their companies.

As the Executive Secretary, NCDMB, Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, noted in his assessment of the technical output of the incubates, some of the solutions developed in the research and innovation endeavour are vitally important to industrial processes in key sectors outside of oil and gas. He said: "These are innovative solutions to everyday problems that we face in the country. Nigerian youths are innovative and creative. They are looking for a good platform, and NCDMB will be that platform."

The incubates, latest entrants into the technology-driven oil and gas segment of entrepreneurship, are Prof Godswill Ofualagba (Rinartics Engineering Solutions Limited); Engr. Kingsley Enalume (AICEMR Engineering Solutions); Christian Efone (EFOCHRIST Nigeria); Dr. Umar Adam Ibrahim (Skylight Prime Consulting Company); Ezekiel Adamu (GLVI); Dr. Bunakiye Japhet (Feasibility Giant Company) and Godwin Uzedhe (OZIENICS).

Others are: Jubril Musa (Amazing360), Paul Ogunedo and Rebecca Amoo (AWI Energies), Aminu Ajuji (Carbon Mop), Ola Abraham (Eastwind Laboratories), Akinlabi Akinbo (Looptel International), Lola Awosika (Ebute Boating and Engineering), Onyeka Ebechidi (Niiru Swift Trade), Ekele Augustine (Rapid Medicare), and Greenagy Fuel.

Innovations galore

At the Milestone Completion Ceremony at the Conference Centre of the Nigerian Content Tower in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State on 24 August, the 17 founders took turns to pitch to potential investors and key oil and gas stakeholders that participated virtually and others who were physically present. Everyone was dazzled

as they demonstrated their innovations and prototypes.

Rinartics Engineering boasts competence in pressurised water-driven micro-turbines for electric power. Its strength is in generating power from water, eliminating the environmental pollution and unsustainability of fossil fuels. AICEMR, which boasts capabilities such as "out-of-sight sensing units, spaced 200 metres apart," Global Positioning System (GPS), and "Drone surveillance," among other things, has developed "Automated oil and gas pipeline vandalism detection system".

EFOCHRIST said: "We create smart tech solutions tailored to meet specific challenges in the oil and gas industry, leveraging cutting-edge technology driven by AI and IoT at its core." With Skylight, an energy analytics consulting company, the value proposition is: "We make energy data make sense." GLVI, with its "smart/automated fire arrestor system", has capability to eliminate "the possibilities of post-crash fires in petrol tanker trucks".

Feasibility Giant Company has "an oil and gas design and modelling system for analysing pipelines and related infrastructure in the oil and gas industry". Ozienics boasts "a smart multichannel independent billing single-phase energy metering system", while Amazing360 has "hardware used to help reduce energy losses, improve energy management, and mi-

nimise carbon emissions". AWI Energies, for its part, "integrates innovative renewable energy solutions into agro-processing, helping to reduce post-harvest losses, improve quality and enhance production of agro-commodities".

Carbon Mop offers "decarbonisation service to carbon-emitting industries"; Eastwind has "a portable fuel monitoring solution to...ensure fuel quality and combat fraudulent practices at the gas pump," while Looptel boasts "an automated renewable energy system efficient and effective in powering telecoms sites and rural off-grid communities".

Ebute Boating and Engineering is for "electric-powered water taxis" to drastically reduce the high operational costs and eliminate carbon dioxide emissions of fossil-powered boats in Nigeria's waterways. Niiru Swift Trade also has capability "to reduce carbon emissions and traffic congestion", while Rapid Medicare has "a unified patient electronic health record (EHR) system to solve the problem of lack of access to healthcare services".

In a keynote address at the event, Wabote said the TIIC was commissioned on 9 September 2021 to, among others, serve as "ecosystem for innovators to think through new ideas for technology adaptation or process improvement" and a "networking platform between researchers, investors and end-users in the oil and gas industry and its linkage sectors".

He said: "Following the conclusion of this accelerator programme, the innovators are now well positioned to scale up and commercialise their products. I hereby charge all beneficiary start-ups of this programme to continue leveraging the network expo

"These are innovative solutions to everyday problems that we face in the country. Nigerian youths are innovative and creative. They are looking for a good platform, and NCDMB will be that platform."

- Engr. Simbi Wabote

sure and effectively fast-track their products to market, while adhering to all relevant compliance and standards requirements."

Represented by the Director, Corporate Services, Mr. Patrick Daziba Obah, the Executive Secretary stressed that "the journey of NCDMB research and development is a long one; a tough one" fraught with complexity and uncertainty. Citing the current programme, he wondered: "What if no one graduated, especially if you are talking about Founder Institute and Silicon Valley?"

Expressing his joy over the successful completion of the milestone, he said: "I reckon today as one that has brought fulfilment to Nigeria."

R&D key to local content

The Director, Planning, Research and Statistics, NCDMB, Alhaji Abdulmalik Halilu, gave an "overview of NCDMB TIIC Operating Model," emphasising that R&D is "a major enabler for local capacity development". He noted that "over 70 percent of our software requirements are met through importation", saying R&D could reverse the trend. "Under

a do-nothing scenario," Nigeria was losing about US\$2 billion annually, he added. Underlining the relevance of mentorship, Halilu expressed happiness at the milestone covered, adding: "We are celebrating them (17 portfolio companies) because they have moved from ideation to the market phase."

A resource person for mentorship, Mr. Adebayo Omole (Managing Partner, Matrix Solicitors), counselled the new portfolio companies to "get all the certifications required"; "get your ideas patented"; "make sure your operational agreements are tight"; "deliver on your promises"; "make sure your technologies don't fail"; "open yourselves to collaboration" and "defend your brand; don't let people steal your intellectual property."

Another resource person, Engr. ThankGod Egbe (Managing Director, CYPHERCENT), advised the incubates that having done so much thus far, they should "leave the technical area, and move into marketing". He stressed the importance of marketing communication and related activities, moving forward.

Key industry stakeholders, through goodwill messages, signalled their interest in the tutelage undergone by the founders and their preparedness for collaboration. In his remarks, Group Chief Executive Officer, Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL), Mallam Mele Kyari, who was represented by the Chief Operating Officer, Upstream Petroleum, NNPCL, Engr. Adokiye Tombomiyeye, said: "This event signals a remarkable milestone in the oil and gas industry. Through collective efforts, we can drive sustainable development."

The Managing Director, Bank of Industry (BoI), Mr. Kayode Pitan, who was represented by the Regional Manager, South-South, Mr. Pacqueens Irabor, praised the NCDMB management for its dedication to "fostering local content development and steering our nation toward unprecedented growth". He said: "This event not only underscores the fruit of innovation but also the shared vision (between NCDMB and critical stakeholders)." The BoI Chief Executive affirmed the bank's commitment to its long-standing partnership with the Board.

In an opening address, the Managing Director, Founder Institute, Abuja, Mrs. Ajuma Ataguba, commended the NCDMB for its initiatives in capacity building, particularly the establishment of the TIIC. She said Founder Institute was appreciative of the partnership that had evolved between the two organisations. Mrs. Ataguba pledged to continue to partner the Board in such endeavours.

- Dianam Dakolo



Mrs. Ajuma Ataguba, Managing Director, Founder Institute, Abuja; Alhaji Abdulmalik Halilu; Director, Planning, Research and Statistics, NCDMB and Mr. Patrick Daziba Obah, Director, Corporate Services at the launch of new 17 portfolio companies that launch of 17 portfolio companies passed through the Board's Technology Incubation and Innovation Centre (TIIC).

AFRICA LOCAL CONTENT ROUNDTABLE 2023

How local content will usher in prosperity on the continent

In the penultimate week of October, Abuja was the host city for delegates from over 23 African countries who congregated for the third edition of the Africa Local Content Roundtable, organised by the African Petroleum Producers Organisation (APPO) and hosted by the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB).

Launched by the NCDMB in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, in June 2021 and handed over to APPO to manage, the annual roundtable has continued to advance local content development across Africa, formulating policies, and strengthening the capabilities of local players across the oil and gas value chain. With the theme: *Enhancing Local Content Development and Deployment in African Oil and Gas Industry*, this year's edition drew policymakers, regulators, diplomats, operators in the oil and gas sector, and other stakeholders - all united to promote local content in Africa and devise strategies to leverage the continent's vast natural resources for the benefit of her people.

The programme began in the morning with a visit to Amal Technologies, a technology firm based at Idu industrial area of Abuja. The company is supported by the NCDMB to produce smart gas/smoke detector alarm devices that monitor and detect smoke and all types of gas leakages, thereby enhancing the safe usage of Liquefied

Petroleum Gas (LPG) in homes.

At the opening of the event, Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary, NCDMB, set the agenda for the delegates. He urged them to come up with strategies that would enhance research and development for the oil and gas industry on the African continent and leverage funding sources to overcome the contraction of capital for the hydrocarbon industry, which is partly caused by the clamour for energy transition by Western nations.

He stressed on the need to take advantage of existing opportunities, such as the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), which has created a 1.3 billion people market, and the need for the participants to suggest how to optimally take advantage of cross-border partnerships. The executive Secretary noted that the APPO Roundtable had all the experts needed to address the issues and explore solutions that would drive the growth and development of the industry. According to him, some parameters are needed to grow local content sustainably. These include regulatory framework, human capacity development, research and development; manufacturing, funding, and cross-border partnerships.

Also, His Excellency, Dr Omar Farouk Ibrahim, Secretary General of APPO, criticised campaigners of energy transition he said African oil producers must be allowed to use their hydrocarbon resources to get out of poverty. Ibrahim described energy as the biggest catalyst for the transformation of Africa, saying Africa must not abandon its God-given hydrocarbon resources, if the continent would achieve energy se-

curity. To develop, he said Africa must be allowed to use the readily available sources of energy to get to the level of the developed countries. "We must be allowed to use it and lift the living conditions of our people and get them out of poverty," Ibrahim said.

Achieving the goals requires some heavy lifting on the part of APPO. The APPO scribe announced the organisation's readiness to tackle challenges of funding, technological expertise, and access to market with a view to making the continent self-reliant. He noted that individual efforts of African nations would not suffice, adding that the key to success is collective action as a continent, as exemplified by the roundtable.

Sen. Heineken Lokpobiri, Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Oil), echoed the need for collaboration among African oil producers. He said: "Collaboration is expected to yield significant economic benefits for our continent. The overarching objective is to achieve tangible growth and ensure energy security within our oil and gas industry."

On the second day, the roundtable was split into four panel sessions, each addressing vital aspects of fostering local content in Africa.

Local content regulatory frameworks, institutions, and best practices

Delegates discussed the importance of establishing robust local content regulatory frameworks and institutions, as well as the need for harmonisation across the continent and the benefits of a unified approach. They emphasised the role of

Sen. Heineken Lokpobiri, Minister of State for Petroleum Resources (Oil); HE Omar Farouk Ibrahim; Secretary General of the African Petroleum Producers Organization (APPO); Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote and the Executive Secretary, Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) and senior personnel of the Board and delegates at the third edition of the Africa Local Content Roundtable in Abuja on Wednesday.



governments in creating an enabling environment for local content, providing clear regulations, and ensuring compliance by national and international companies.

The recommendations from the session include the creation of a continental body to coordinate local content initiatives, the development of standardised frameworks to evaluate and measure local content compliance, and the sharing of best practices among African nations. The role of local content institutions in enabling local/regional societies to supply the industry with quality services, goods, and skilled manpower was also discussed.

The second panel examined the significance of local content institutions in building capacity and promoting the production of quality goods and services within Africa. The discussion revolved around the role these institutions play in educating, train-

ing, and certifying local professionals and the need for tailored programmes to address industry-specific needs.

The panel’s recommendations include the establishment of centres of excellence to provide specialised training, partnerships between local content institutions and industry players, as well as the creation of mentorship programmes to bridge the gap between skilled manpower and industry demand.

Options for supporting innovation, technology development, tools and equipment manufacturing, and digital solutions in Africa

The focus of the third panel was on innovation, technology, and digital solutions. The participants stressed the need for African nations to take ownership of their technological and industrial development. To promote local content, the panelists recommended increased investment in research and development, technology parks, and incentives for innovation.

The discussions additionally centered on strategies to facilitate investor mobility with a proposal that African nations consider the establishment of an investor visa programme. Furthermore, the importance of replicating the NCDMB model in other African countries was emphasised with a focus on transitioning from Nigerian content to a broader African content perspective. The discourse also delved into optimising entry strategies and leveraging the unique strengths of individual African countries, thereby fostering a collective and region-wide advancement in local content development.

The discussions echoed the importance of public-private partnerships and suggestions included the need to create innovation hubs, funding startups and technology ventures, as well as establishing policies that favour the use of local technologies and solutions in industry.

Funding local content activities and programmes implementation: challenges and options

The final panel session addressed the financing of local content activities and programmes. Participants acknowledged the challenges in securing funding for local content initiatives, particularly in the face of economic constraints and the need for sustainable funding mechanisms.

The recommendations emphasised the creation of dedicated local content funds, collaboration with international financial institutions and investors, as well as leveraging private sector investments. The panel stressed that for local content to thrive, there must be accessible and sustainable financing options that support the growth and development of local industries.

As the attendees departed from the Africa Local Content Roundtable, they carried with them a collective vision and a renewed determination to steer local content development in Africa towards a brighter future for the continent and its people.

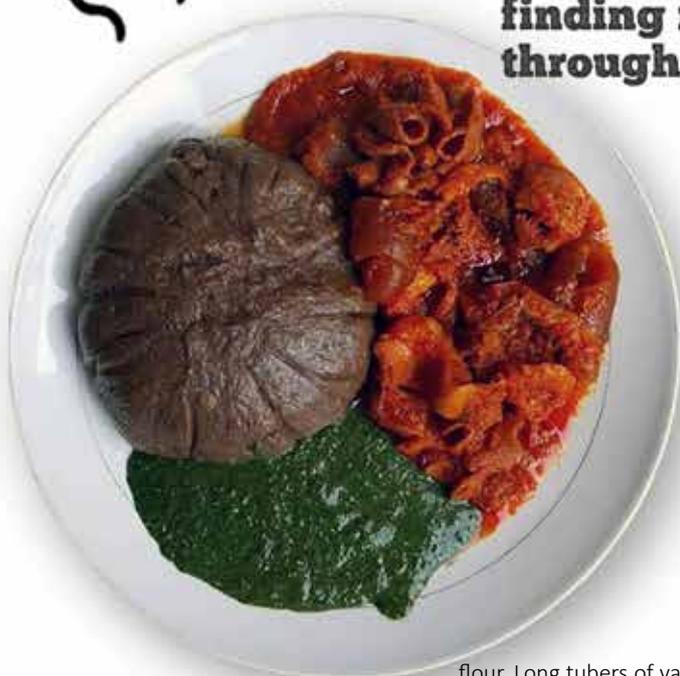
The Executive Secretary of NCDMB, who closed the proceedings, called for more conferences within Africa to provide opportunities for deeper collaboration across platforms and to foster sustainable local content development and prosperity for Africa and Africans.

- Ophelia Jackson



Amala

The legendary Yoruba meal, is finding new connoisseurs through e-commerce



In his 1965 quintet *Ibadan*, the great poet John Pepper Clark portrayed the city as, “a running splash of rust.” This was a passive reference to the prominent iron-roof buildings that once defined the ancient city’s skyline. Around the city, you could be drawn to a comparison of rickety Mira cabs and the quiet-moving *Omi Titun* BRT buses, all pointing to a wide-range of makeovers. Yet, Ibadan’s rivalry between relics and remodelled infrastructure has no bearing on its young residents; they are the ones who love *amala* so much! If Clark had lived to describe today’s Ibadan, he would see several hotspots serving the delicacy all over Oyo State’s capital. His views will definitely change, almost like some sort of renaissance is going on.

Amala is a staple swallow food native to the Yoruba tribe of Nigeria. It is made of yam flour, cassava flour, or unripe plantain

For some, the allure of Ibadan’s amala joints lies in the tastefulness, which influences them to travel long distances to savour the food. Internet-enabled payments and growth in fulfilment services brought them to explore amala and it has been quite an experience.

flour. Long tubers of yam are peeled, sliced, cleaned, dried and blended into an off-white fine flour that the Southwest indigenes call *elubo*. The powder is skilfully kneaded with boiling water to make *amala*, and then a variety of flavourful soups can come along, allowing for a delightful culinary experience. As Bimpe, an *amala* lover, puts it: “*Amala* is the best delicacy in the world and everyone should have a taste of it at least once in their lifetime.”

Heading off to northern Ibadan on a cool Wednesday afternoon, we started a walk into the Ose Olorun Restaurant in Bodija, affectionately dubbed “Amala Skye”. Upon entry, what we beheld was an unending stream of customers.

“*E fun mi ni gbegiri ati ewedu*,” (literally: Give me bean and jute mallow soup), Opeyemi, a 25-year-old resident of Apete, a town located about 12 kilometres away, raised an order. He wanted a mixture of *gbegiri* and *ewedu* soups (otherwise known as *abula*), which he described as perfect for optimal enjoyment of an *amala* dish. “*Amala pass amala*,” he declared, a smile gracing his lips as he revealed the reason behind his 12-kilometre drive from Apete to Bodija just to get *amala*.

“It’s not just the unparalleled quality of *amala* that draws me here, but the *ogufe* (goat meat) beats anyone sold anywhere else in my books. I come here three times a week to buy *amala* for my girlfriend, my friend, and myself, which is why you can see me with three take-outs.”

Someone who is not a very good cook like Niye thinks Amala Skye offers a readily available solution.

“However,” he said spiritedly, “while Amala Skye certainly addresses my culinary limitations, there are moments when dining here proves rather uncomfortable. You see, as a remote worker, my inclination is

to return to my laptop as soon as I’ve concluded my meal. But as you can see, the hustle and bustle here tend to impede my concentration. So, whenever I need to eat out and do some serious work immediately after, I find myself gravitating towards other restaurants.”

Niye’s observation about the bustling atmosphere was undeniably accurate; conversations buzzed like an animated symphony at nearly every table, and the order counter was a hub of activities, orchestrating the fulfilment of customers’ orders. Nonetheless, there is a but.

“While I share a certain affinity with this restaurant,” says Niye, “I occasionally eat at other restaurants whose food is just as good. Nevertheless, Amala Skye’s location proves easier to drive or stroll into compared to other restaurants like Iya Meta’s in the heart of Bodija.”

For some, the allure of Ibadan’s *amala* joints lies in the tastefulness, which influences them to travel long distances to savour the food. Internet-enabled payments and growth in fulfilment services brought them to explore *amala* and it has been quite an experience. For many, they cannot find the time from their busy schedules to visit the restaurants. The spots have grown patronage due to the delivery service add-on.

Whatever is driving the desire, there is a commonality among the restaurants: they embrace innovation to oil their appeal to the younger generation of Ibadan residents; that is, those who have busy schedules but must find time to eat.

- **Ayotomiwa Elesho** is a student of the University of Ibadan.

ISI AGU

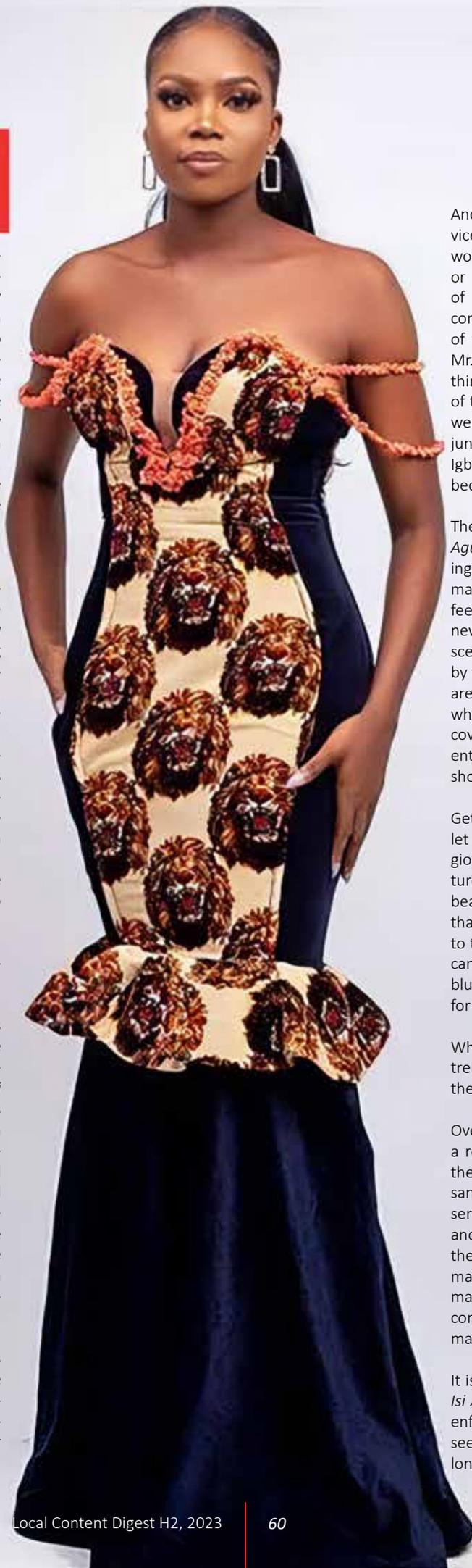
Crossing gender lines to make a statement

Unless you were a prince or his significant other, in the olden days, nobody was allowed to turn up for ordinary outings wearing a dress draped with lion heads all over it. Even if a tailor decided to produce a long-sleeve kaftan, alternatively, let the sleeve reach slightly up to the elbow. It would still be a mismatch if the gathering was not a fez hat-littered party to honour a title holder or the new search for the husband on the day of a wedding. It all points to a matter of timing and the depiction of the leading class when the guest rocks *Isi Agu* to a designated gig, and this is why that is.

A fashion designer finally has a set of apparel separated after several slices were cut off from up to four yards of *Isi Agu* clothing, yet it goes beyond right-fitting measurements and styling when examining its symbol for denoting chieftaincy. The collage of lion heads across the entire surface of a dress looks like an artwork, and in its multiplicity is the theme of survivability or resilience when the back is literally facing the wall. Lions usually portray these characteristics and Igbo south-easterners believe their tribe to have such ingredients. This is why *Isi Agu* is quite a hit. And with that symbolism comes the tenderness of the woman coming into the scene.

Isi Agu used to be exclusively men's fashion until the womenfolk took an interest. Then, a renaissance started - it had to. The radiance of a white wedding gown's majestic view from a church's pew to the chancel seems obsolete because millennial brides have been opting for *Isi Agu*-inspired iterations. Without stylists and designers, there would have been no one available to redirect the exclusiveness that men and *Isi Agu* appeared to be having. The vast young-hearted new breeds of fashion entrepreneurs are the ones driving the generality that the apparel has transitioned into. It is the reason a cross-gender fusion has been visualised when analysing *Isi Agu's* newly-found massive reach.

The clothing brand, Asandrea Fashion has been making contributions that aid the new interpretation around *Isi Agu*. Managing Director Tochukwu Michael Tochukwu has been reimagining designs both for women and men.



And the new iterations come with advice on the best way to match. For women, it is to avoid wearing footwear or heels that take away the elegance of the lioness who is struggling to complete a simple walk. If in doubt of the essence of the *Isi Agu*, here is Mr. Tochukwu in an interview making things clear. "We are kings and queens of the jungle all over the world. As it is well known, the lion is (the king) of the jungle. *Isi Agu* is a special fabric for Ndi Igbo because it defines who we are," he said.

The men already have their basic *Isi Agu* outing kit. It pictures them wearing beads and a hat to complete the match. But in the women's section, it feels like things are evolving. With the new designs of *Isi Agu* coming into the scene, shunning heels could be a shabby tip if taken. Women's fashion brands are springing into a newer ideation box where other approaches have been discovered. The apparel comes in different colours although there are fakes. A shopper must watch out.

Getting an adulterated version will not let out the beauty of wearing the prestigious *Isi Agu*. Fashion house Flaws Couture, which mainly caters to plus-size beauties, has the authentic varieties that an audience would like. According to the fashion brand's website, designs can come in up to five colours, such as blue, red, white, green and black. It is for visual aesthetics.

Where sourcing should lead to is an extremely glamorous outfit made for you, the woman.

Over at Kaybees Fashion Styles, there is a reimagining also going on. Although they only recently joined the Renaissance, female audiences have been served *Isi Agu* in the form of long gowns, and short ones, like the ones created by the brand. But these are mostly for formal outings. With a blouse spread over maybe a woman's jeans, for instance, comes a clicking sound because a new match has been found.

It is a vast array of stylish ways to wear *Isi Agu* and for the moment, the womenfolk are the main curators, having seen men hang on to exclusivity for too long.

Image:claraitosblog.com



Jenga

improves productivity at the workplace, one block at a time

Each move is a mini problem-solving exercise requiring laser focus, creativity and analytical mind

The two opposing teams, made up of four members each, were intently focused on a stack of wooden blocks right in the middle of the smoothly polished table like a totem. With eyes narrowed in concentration and minds undoubtedly shuffling through options, an onlooker may conclude that the eight at the table are in a sort of trance.

Far from it. The gathering is neither a religious one nor in any way has a religious undertone. It is an ongoing game of Jenga, a game where participants take turns to pull out a wooden block from the stack and placing same on top of the pile without collapsing the stack. The team or individual that disrupts the arrangement leading to the collapse of the wooden tower loses the game.

Jenga requires players to maintain unwavering attention on the tower of wooden blocks, each one balanced precariously on the other. The minutest loss in concentration can lead to a misstep and ultimately a tumbling tower, hence the trance-like focus of the teams described above. Participants in a Jenga game must quickly learn the importance of maintaining laser-sharp concentration.

It also requires creativity and, most importantly, an analytical mind. A player must be able to look at the stack and decide quickly which piece to remove without bringing down the tower.

While Jenga is a fun pastime that may help to relieve stress and anxiety, it is increasingly becoming a powerful tool to enhance concentration, creativity, and analytic thinking in indi-

viduals and teams in various settings, including in the workplace. It is equally a great game for team bonding.

Today, soft skills such as effective communication, analytic thinking, concentration, creativity and teamwork, are so central to productivity and organisational health that smart businesses are beginning to exploit unique opportunities such as the one represented by the simple yet impactful game called Jenga to enhance these skills in their workers. Jenga is not just about pulling out wooden blocks; it is a strategic game that requires analytic thinking. Players must evaluate the entire structure, identify the most viable block to remove without upsetting the stack, and anticipate the consequences of their actions. Each move is like a mini problem-solving exercise.

By playing Jenga, individuals can sharpen their analytical skills and strategic thinking. These skills are transferable to the workplace, where decision-making, problem-solving, and strategic planning are essential components of success. Jenga encourages participants to think critically, analyse situations, and weigh the pros and cons before making a move.

But of greater benefit of this game is playing in teams. The planning, strategising, and decision-making as a unit can help the team-building efforts of a company. Two heads, it is said, are better than one, which is why team-building efforts are critical to a company's growth. "The power of a team is in the incremental synergy attached to it," says Yinka Olugbodi, a professional team-building coach and human resource consultant. A study by the Universi-

ty of Illinois, United States of America, found "that groups of size three, four, and five outperformed the best individuals. We attribute this performance to the ability of people to work together to generate and adopt correct responses, reject erroneous responses, and effectively process information."

In today's digital world dotted with distractions, the ability to concentrate on a single task is now increasingly valuable. Jenga is a great activity to hone concentration and focus. The game demands that players maintain a trance-like focus on the tower of wooden blocks, each one balanced precariously on the other. In a corporate environment, creativity and innovation are essential for driving growth and staying competitive. Jenga can serve as a fun platform for employees to exercise their creative thinking, leading to more innovative approaches to problem-solving and project development.

Jenga's impact extends far beyond its reputation as a casual game. It is a valuable tool for enhancing concentration, analytic thinking, creativity, and team bonding. In the workplace, these skills are critical to success and they help foster a healthy, collaborative environment.

Now you know. The next time you see a group of people gazing intently at an object, it probably is a Jenga game going on. And remember: those wooden blocks represent much more than just a fun pastime; they can help an organisation build better professionals and stronger teams, one block at a time.

Brymo

Creating Alternative Sounds to Global Acclaim

A snapshot shows a stiff capture of a forest scene. In the picture, tall trees are now showing like flat surfaces because a drone did not see beneath their green heads- what it did not miss was the singer Qlawale Qloforo Brymo firmly coiled in a spot that only he can master.

Music streaming platforms are holding all the metadata of Brymo from early on. From when he was welded to the Chocolate City crew to when he rose to a critically acclaimed *Oṣó* album in March 2018. It has been a remarkable five years since then.

Over the interval, *Brymo* like former label mate M.I. Abaga will squeal when conjuring the singer's image in a song, has launched a newer character in himself, the one that has debuted with *Mansa*, his first rookie offering in the courageous pursuit of a budding sonic artiste. That combines with making an acting debut in Biyi Bandele's Netflix original, *Elesin Oba: The King's Horseman*. This was in 2022 the year he ventured into the sonic expedition.

On the beach of the upscale Victoria Island in Lagos, 1 October is where the next act had to happen. There at the Landmark Beach, 35-year-old Brymo pulled out from a reclusive shell for a moment and sand to his fans at a nighttime gig that made jaws drop as *Order The Concert* took place. It was here that the base caught up with his library of calming music.

On that night, the focus was 8:00 p.m. at the beach. He was singing out from a stage of course. All the times Brymo had hosted a coming together with the fans, like at the *Organised Chaos* concert in 2022, it resulted in an atmosphere solemnly rendering food for thought.

It is because his songs contain lyrics that speak to human virtues or a lingering deformity.

With a full dive into Brymo's album comes

the listener's meeting with the characters that are yielding to human flaws and contacting an open path towards soul restoration, the reason Brymo is so deep.

He credits himself as having started the Alternative music genre to bypass the mainstream which dominated up to two decades ago. Picture 15 years into the new century, being a part of the mainstream for an artiste meant being limited to quick rhythms. That was not a bad thing- it only reflected an African society's thirst for socialising.

When Brymo talked about needing to have *risqué*, inelegant experience with a female musician before they could even dare to hit the recording booth, it created a massive backlash online, on the radio and TV back in July – because his statement apparently affected women. And the female artiste was Simi, known for her Afropop but mixed with *Alté*. The alternative sound is so grown now that no one can claim it as a niche. But there is Brymo flirting with the idea that he pioneered this sub-genre that was phenomenally sluggish in growth. It takes a lot of work to excel here, much has to do with an artiste taking care of things themselves.

This, right here, is muttering the exact words that Brymo used when he described his 'papacy' of the exclusive alternative ring: "In the Nigerian music scene, the 'alternative' was invented by me in 2013 as a cure to the ills of the mainstream, not to be a part of it," reads the beginning of his 6 May 2018 Instagram post, which the singer explains "means that the process of recording, performing, distributing and rating your work is different from the mainstream". The idea that he was the first to board that ship brought on the obvious feeling of discovery.

Many catalogues of albums and singles make Brymo wear the experienced look, the way vets

Many catalogues of albums and singles make Brymo wear the experienced look, the way vets do. He is a creator of an art form that can only possess a single signature. No musical excellence has come close to him.

do. He is a creator of an art form that can only possess a single signature. No musical excellence has come close to him. Out there on his social media, the mindset considers getting to finish a race. By 1 December 2023, it would be the launch of his 12th studio album titled: *Macabre*.

Over 123 countries will get to stream the new music when it drops on the set date. To get a sense of it is to imagine a "largely Reggae, and English album, with Apala intonations accompanying many a performance". This coating of combinations is somewhat a recipe that has guaranteed Brymo's plain sailing all through these years- the rule is to never get stale with folk beats but to keep blasting out through earbuds to show the results of further experimenting with music.

Who else gets the credit for the dominance that Afrobeats now enjoys in global musicphere if not exceptionally talented artistes littering Nigeria, where it all began for the genre? Sold out tickets at the London Stadium by some of the artistes, for instance, have mirrored that. It gives an amount of transparency concerning just how much the world is loving Nigerian musical exports.

Burna
Boy*Sittin' on top of the world*

Practically every conversation surrounding Nigeria on the music front has Burna Boy's name on it and there is a reason for it beyond his breaking of new grounds. A new ground has been broken, and what follows is a total diversion into the uniquely carved Afrobeats – that is the bar on which Burna Boy is measuring himself instead of Afrobeats. Before the release of his seventh album, *I Told Them*, on 25 August, he was already blowing out steams with *Sittin' On Top of the world*, the fourth track which had 21 Savage on.

Prior to the album's release, the listeners were expectedly in the dark about what to truly expect, but this jam, which brought back the nostalgic '90s American R&B, gave them a good feel. It is a visual scan into Burna Boy's dominance among not just his African peers but the wider music verse and even sports. A 2023 BET Hip Hop Awards nomination in the Song of the Year category shows the degree of influence it has across earbuds, although it did not win. That is how exciting the driving has been since *L.I.F.E - Leaving an Impact for Eternity*, his debut studio album released in 2013. Precisely a decade from then, what the landscape looks like is one Grammy Award with room for more on 4 February 2024. After that, this conversation continues.

Asake *Lonely At The Top*

Early on before the singer Ahmed Ololade 'Asake' became so known, the crowd at a concert that the 28-year-old was attending would usually look out for a female artiste when the show host called him to the stage. This is because his name possesses feminine features. Combined with Asake's artistry, the fondness of the fans only grew, especially since he dropped his second album *Work of Art* in June. Then came a speedy milestone making it one of the most streamed albums in Nigeria. It is not surprising to find Asake lurking around this list with the track *Lonely at the top*. The YBNL signee wanted so much money to go along with his fame, which is why he chose music over a dancing career.

On this track, he announces himself a bit more, letting the universe in to discover lyrical him. On the outside, it is not really lonely for Asake after selling out the O2 Arena in London this past April. Selling out the 20,000-seat capacity music venue is a lingering dream that budding musicians want to actualise. On that front, it is a job well done. Other Nigerian singers who have lived such a dream are pretty much torchbearers – like Wizkid, Davido, then Burna Boy. Now, Asake is ranked in that class. That is how he proves his role as an A-List artiste. The *Lonely at the top* track was opening up and accepting his new position on highly rated U.S Billboard Charts.

Ayra
Starr*Rhythm & Blues*

All the Gen Z love for the Mavin Records musician Ayra Starr is not likely to dry up soon because she has been making the journey worthwhile. Now, her September-released track *Rhythm & Blues* has got heads swelling from impressing so much. The reaction is showing on multiple music charts - Apple's or Spotify. These streaming platforms have been serving her to listeners and they are enjoying the thrill. What better way to arouse emotions than when both the 21-year-old Ayra Starr and the fan converge on the theme of love?

This is what the song *Rhythm & Blues* provides. Such smooth intertwining of positive energy going on over a calm and steady burst of the beat! In her celestial being alter ego, the songstress has admitted to her role in "making music for soft girls and lover boys." It is no surprise they have been given R&B to moan to. A month after the song dropped on 12 September, came the visuals which took the audience further into moments and symbols of affection. The focused moment between lovers taking turns to fly a kite and at a restaurant fish balls using a chopstick are all part of the trail before betrayal looks up to visualise its line of sight. Beautiful storytelling lives in this song.

Actor and director, Lateef Adedimeji, is expanding the thespian industry in new ways

To make a very visible mark of his eligibility in the transition from a lowly but supernaturally endowed budding apprentice to a sharp-clawed warrior who disrupts the mischiefs of remarkably corrupt authority in *Jagun Jagun*, an August 2023 Netflix original Yorùbá epic, a lanky, flat-chested *Gbotija* had to perform the most strenuous challenge that ought to bring on a fatality in an ordinary scenario. That strength was depicted by the actor and character-trained director Lateef Adedimeji. He is the one whose passionate delivery of roles has earned him the approval of the watching audiences that mostly binge away from the cinema. From their couch or the backseat of a taxi, they see Adedimeji interacting with the issues that connect with their box of values, about fewer opportunities for young people in Nigeria to positively shape a more resilient country.

He arouses emotions to create courage and mental agility, showing these as the avenues through which Gen Z audiences can make lasting encouraging change that cures anomalies. This has rather too soon perhaps confirmed Mr. Adedimeji's authenticity as the perfect tool for conveying various cinematic expressions. Adedimeji is now the toast of filmmakers who want their product to hit numbers in the dark rooms of cinemas or through streaming platforms but he is not looking at it as a job done!

Let us say we were on a journey into the career trajectory of the actor Lateef Adedimeji, the skillfulness that fans see - the task of grooming imbecilic facial

expressions to communicate a thought or camouflaging as the clueless Igbo chemist in a Nollywood Yoruba movie – they had long been groomed helping telecoms company Airtel to connect with a niche market through TV and social media advertising. The listeners just want an experience in their insatiable thirst for internet connectivity or phone calls and filmmaker Adedimeji could give that.

Settling on from this stage, Adedimeji had now become a valuable exhibit suited to family audiences. Surely this connection had to morph into the actor building a connection both with streamers and the marketing brands seeking to grow their share. That is what has been. There is really no stopping him from here, if you think about it.

Lots of milestones have trailed the release of *Jagun Jagun*, even though the movie world has seen new equally commendable pictures being put out after this. Eight weeks into its debut on the streaming service comes filmmaker Editi Effiong with *The Black Book* on 22 September. Nonetheless, the traction continues for the cast of *Jagun Jagun* like Lateef Adedimeji is. He is not aloof to his successes, stating on the platform X: "The acknowledgment of our effort is one thing that keeps us going," reads his appreciation to the Africa Film Festival (AFRIFF), which listed him as an honouree for this year's festivities tagged *AFRIFF 12*. The anticipated praise is because of his role in *Jagun Jagun*, a picture that also remembers him as *Gbotija*, the adept fighter and committed lover. This combination interests the audiences.

What seems to feel exceptionally symbolic beyond the recognition attributed to him is the consistent reach garnered by Nollywood in about a decade. Content streaming is largely part of the change. Through this chemistry has brought long-sought awareness for Nigeria's unique movie industry.

"I think we deserve the attention and all the rewards

Mr. Adedimeji's authenticity as the perfect tool for conveying various cinematic expressions. Adedimeji is now the toast of filmmakers who want their product to hit numbers in the dark rooms of cinemas or through streaming platforms but he is not looking at it as a job done!

that are coming because we have been working and we didn't just start yesterday. It has been a long time coming for some of us in the movie industry. My concern is just that our producers should not be selfish. They should let the love and proceeds go (around) the industry to encourage other young producers and actors to grow and expand as well," the much-admired thespian said in a recent interview.

With the emergence of African storytellers into the global village has come the thirst to dive into the genesis of local communities, so you have the appetite to tell historical movies by filmmakers. This is what birthed the 2016 political thriller, '76, featuring Ramsey Nouah, and then Lateef Adedimeji the Apala musician in *Ayinla* (2021). What is happening next is Adedimeji diving deeper into the waters.

In there, he found *Lisabi*, an upcoming picture that mirrors the title of a gigantic warrior and legend in his Abeokuta hometown. This warrior rescued Egba natives from the tyranny of the nearby Oyo Empire. Is Mr. Adedimeji about to expose yet another virtue? If yes, he is having to turn down new roles to focus on creating.

NIGERIAN BLOCKBUSTERS OWNED 2023

What the Year 2023 has looked like from a Nollywood prism has been the deepening of output by actors and filmmakers leading them in an endeavour to tell remarkably unique African stories. Although the year is winding down, there has not been a shortage of creativity, which has seen new pictures stepping up for a nomination at the 2024 Oscars.

released to cinemas or content streaming platforms since June. The titles that both cinemagoers and streamers have been bingeing on have had local and international consequences. This is why a few have made it here for their exceptional qualities and driving further exposure to previously unknown cultures.

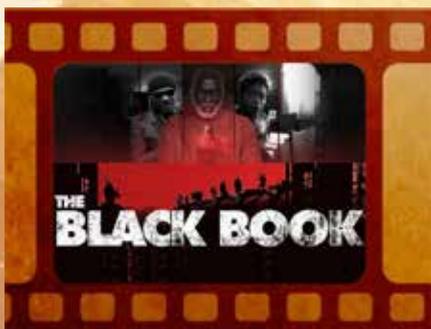
Such has been the class of the biggest Nigerian movies that were either



JAGUN JAGUN

Here is a Yoruba epic film splashed with a belligerent feature that was released to Netflix on 10 August. It stars Femi Adebayo who doubles as the producer and the character *Ogunjimi*, a warlord who has the interest of monarchs and nobles. Their relationship, therefore, birthed tyranny, brutal army raids and then deaths. It was only when an opposing figure in the semblance of a supporting cast, Lateef Adedimeji (*Gbotija*) started gaining prominence that a shuffling of the board went on. The result was the total toppling of kingdoms because patience was wearing thin.

Beyond the storytelling is the record and moving impact that *Jagun Jagun* continues to make in the film industry months after its release, particularly for the prominent cast like Adebayo and Adedimeji. At the Africa Film Festival (AFRIFF) beginning on 5 November, the pair have been lined up for honours; their recognition is not just for the mere fact that a new movie had been released, it was for the cinematography and well-versed battle scenes that have made huge impact on the audience. Reviews have noticed a distinct approach to the depiction of an epic, it is why *Jagun Jagun* mostly received a full thumb.



THE BLACK BOOK

It seems filmmakers are converging on a theme that finally mirrors the deformity present in their society. Editi Effiong's *The Black Book* shows this by visiting the oddly vulnerable police cells where a detainee can vanish without a trace, and then the innocent is made to be the fall guy to cover up the dishonest manoeuvring that goes on. Released on 22 September, *The Black Book* sets foot in the hearts of the audience through Richard Mofe-Damijo playing Deacon Paul Edima, a reformed element of the underworld.

One time before he found God, he had previously served the mighty and powerful to carry out assassinations. This is what led to the killing of a journalist by Paulo but Vic Kalu, the daughter of the deceased, illustrated by actress Ade Laoye, many years later would be offering him journalistic help when his own son Damilola (Olumide Oworu) is killed by a member of the notorious SAKS state security agency, which also serves as a tool to perpetuate some of the ills in the society. *The Black Book* looks at human rights infringement and graft fighting back against the attempt to orchestrate a clean-up by the good guys.



MAMI WATA

In just a short distance of its release to cinemas on 8 September, *Mami Wata* has been making lots of waves and bothering writers to come up with positive reviews. That is how good it has got for C.J. "Fiery" Obasi who wrote and directed this movie. This picture has become Nigeria's only submission in the Best International Feature Film category of the 2024 Oscars and the third from the country ever put up for consideration. The movie, shown in black and white cinematography and voiced in Pidgin English, is simply getting closer to the West African mermaid who has plagued the minds of several generations, particularly kids. In the movie, the Mami Wata is a river deity that protects all the residents of Iyi village who care to rely on her.

She gives them food and good health so that they can carry their bodies. To fully access their benefits, the people need to go through an intermediary, called Mama Efe (Rita Edochie). But the film does not follow that line of simplicity – there are issues to solve when a section in Iyi village begins to feel like the world is leaving them behind. This unusual delivery of a movie is what has inspired the attention of the Sundance Film Festival where it won the *World Cinema Dramatic: Special Jury Award* for Cinematography. It is possible that this production will make it to the Oscars night at the Dolby Theatre in the United States but the preliminary shortlist voting, which guarantees the entry past 21 December, must first happen.

Masking in the euphoria of retaining the award as the Best Federal Agency in transparency and efficiency in business for the second consecutive year, the management and staff of the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) rolled out the drums in the third week of November to celebrate the 2023 Customer Service Week in style.

The Customer Service week is celebrated every year across the globe to highlight the importance of customer service and individuals who serve customers diligently on daily basis. This year's celebration had an extra zest for the Board because of the award by the Presidential Enabling Business Environment Council (PEBEC) and accolades from other organisations.

The celebration was organised by the SERVICOM (Service Compact with All Nigerians) unit of the Board and was scheduled as a two-day event. It had on the menu a corporate walk, customer service week workshop, cook-off competition, among groups and gala night. Unfortunately, the industrial action declared by organised labour in Nigeria to protest the unfortunate assault on Mr. Joe Ajaero, President of Nigerian Labour Congress, in Imo State, disrupted the first day of the programme. However, the management and staff of NCDMB rallied to make the most of the second day.

The day began with a meet and greet with Nigerian award-winning film actress, author, social justice advocate, and politician, Hilda Dokubo. Thereafter, the actress addressed the Board's staff gathered at the canteen floor, narrating how she and her contemporaries applied local content principles and built Nollywood to become the world's third biggest movie industry. She highlighted how the entertainment industry has become very vast and is unarguably one of the biggest contributors to Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). She thereafter challenged NCDMB to inten-



Dances, comedy as NCDMB marks unique Customer Service Week



sify efforts in promoting local content in the oil and gas industry and linkage sectors.

Staff of the Board were gorgeously dressed in different styles of a unique adire fabric and they enjoyed sumptuous lunch together.

The gala night, which followed in the evening, was at the 1,000-seater NCDMB conference hall. It was a night of music, dance and comedy as the audience were thrilled with the majestic dances of the Bayelsa Cultural Troupe, rib cracking jokes from the master of ceremony Mac-Ake Boma and comedian, MC Monica as well as the sweet, melodious rendition of tunes by a band. The management and staff of NCDMB in attendance dropped their usual toga of officialdom as they danced to the melodious music.

In his speech at the gala night, Mr. Akintunde Adelana, Director, Monitoring and Evaluation, NCDMB, who is the overall leader of the SERVICOM project, highlighted the customer service strides of the Board, tracing the impressive journey of how the Board became the back-to-back champion in service delivery amongst all government agencies in Nigeria. He paid special tribute to the Executive Secretary for leading by example and transforming NCDMB in service delivery. He assured that the Board would maintain its customer service performance and would even go beyond customer satisfaction to the new level of customer delight.

Highlights of the night were the presentation of awards to various categories of staff who contributed to the customer service accomplishments and the rhythmic dances of staff, which continued into the late hours of the night.

- Mayor Ikoroha



SAMUEL BALAMI

HSE Manager, MG Vowgas

TESTIMONY NOGIC JQS WORKS!

The essence and workings of the Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry Content Joint Qualification System (NOGIC JQS) were the attestations of a young upwardly mobile Nigerian engineer when he narrated the story of his humble beginnings and dramatic ascent in socio-economic circumstances.

Thirty-seven-year-old Engr. Samuel Balami holds office as the Health, Safety and Environment (HSE) Manager at MG VOWGAS Limited, a leading engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) company based at Woji, Port Harcourt, where his official responsibilities place him in constant interactions with major international oil companies (IOCs) and indigenous oil and gas firms.

In his days as a student at the University of Maiduguri, Maiduguri, Borno State, where he obtained his first degree in 2007, there was no inkling that young Samuel Balami would land himself an exciting job in the oil and gas industry. His journey began when he registered on the NOGIC JQS while studying at the University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Oyo State, for a Master of Science (M.Sc.) degree in Petroleum Engineering.

Stipulated in the Nigeria Oil and Gas Industry Content Development (NOGICD) Act, 2010, the NOGIC JQS was created by the Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) to provide an industry databank of available capabilities and national skill development pool as well as serve the Nigerian Content registration and pre-qualification of contractors in the oil and gas industry and verification of contractors' capacities and capabilities, among other services.

Small beginnings yield great results

For the young graduate or job seeker, the most important role of NOGIC JQS is the opportunity it provides to be selected for a training opportunity or employment. Interestingly, Balami did not even know such a platform existed. "I didn't know that the NOGIC JQS portal existed...Somebody just casually mentioned in class that there was a programme like this that helps young Nigerians to get job experience in the oil and gas industry: a programme that would give you training and stipend, and still gives you the job experience. I just thought to give it a try and then I registered on the platform."

Perhaps, he had assumed that the registration would amount to nothing. But around July in 2016, he got an invitation



for an aptitude test in Port Harcourt. He recalled that “we took an exam and then an interview followed. The process of selection was so transparent. I didn’t know anybody, I just applied for it. I didn’t have to know anybody in NCDMB. I didn’t have to know any senator. I just applied, I did the test and exams and went back. And then I was called and selected for the Nigerian Content on-the-job training programme at Energy Works Technology (EWT), a subsidiary of Nestoil Group”.

On the content, structure and duration of the training, the soft-spoken Adama-born engineer said: “The programme was for 18 months. Once we came on board after the induction, we were split into various departments. From the preliminary, I was sent to HSE (Health, Safety, and Environment). So we registered to do the HSE- classroom training. We got registered for the class of training.”

Balami said the training put the participants through an entrepreneurship programme while they also registered for the NEBOSH IGC (International General Certificate) exams. “I had a 10-day training programme (in occupational health and safety) in the classroom and I studied hard and took the exam.”

Balami stressed that the NOGIC JQS exposed him to the oil and gas industry and gave him a platform to soar. He added: “The NOGIC JQS is there to help us. Please, get registered. The selection process is free of abuse. You don’t need to know anyone to be part of the programme.”

The young engineer said the exams were highly monitored and the participants wrote it at the British Council. He described the questions as tough but interesting. Alas! He was successful. His accomplishment sank in when he realised that many other participants in the previous batch had failed the exams.

Done with the classwork, the trainees were sent to the field, to learn under a safety officer. Balami described the experience as great because he learnt how to talk to people. “We were conducting toolbox meetings. As a trainee safety officer, I could stop people that are working unsafe. I began to have the ability to correct people that were working in unsafe manner. I was learning fast,” he said.

As part of the programme, Balami got a certificate in entrepreneurship. He values the learnings and the certificate because “even if one does not remain in the oil and gas industry, one can just use the entrepreneurship skills to achieve something.” The young engineer also received a NEBOSH certificate for IGCI International General Certificate 1, IGC2, and IGC 3.

Luckily for young Balami, some openings came up towards the end of their programme. “We were lucky there were openings in the HSE Department at EWT at that time. And then my supervisor spoke up for me. He said: ‘This guy is doing his job, he knows what he’s doing. I’m going to retain him.’ Four of the 10 trainees attached there were retained.”

Upskilling avails huge advantages

Balami recalled his fond memories and experiences working for EWT, which is a big player in construction, fabrication, engineering and installation. On one, occasion a drill rig was brought to the jetty and he was the HSE person to give coverage for the maintenance on that drill rig. “We provided the HSE support for maintenance on this rig. We did some projects for Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC), some for Technic FMC, including some of the well-head fabrication they were doing that we provided support for them. After a while, we got some contracts to go offshore, and I was there as the HSE Supervisor. I came back and then work kept getting better.”

A firm believer in continuous learning, Balami continued to acquire trainings after the NEBOSH. He said: “I was able to go for ISO 4500, Occupational Health and Safety Management System. After a while I saw the relevance to get the Quality Management System – the ISO 9001 Quality Management System. I am a lead auditor for both Quality and HSE.”

After a while, the benefits of these trainings became evident as they helped him land his current job as the HSE Manager at MG VOWGAS. Balami said: “I was working as a Coordinator at Energy Works and there was this vacancy for a manager position at MG VOWGAS. I decided to give it a try. I sent in my curriculum vitae (CV) and I was called for an interview. I did the interview, and I was selected.”

Balami was dumbfounded by how he landed the new opportunity. “My manager where I was working (EWT) also applied for the same position, but I was selected above him. I asked questions from a couple of people at Human Resources. A lady said, ‘Yes, your manager has more experience than you, but you added some other qualifications that he didn’t have.’ That was how I moved over to MG VOWGAS as HSE Manager and I’ve been here since 2021,” he said.

Drawing from his life, he advises young women and men to get trainings after studying in university. He noted that for anyone who wants to have a career in construction or in the oil and gas sector, it is important to get additional hands-on skills. Balami confessed that the NOGICJQS programme helped him to understand that it is not just enough to acquire a degree in the university; it is equally important to have a skill after graduation.

He also counseled on the need to take trainings seriously once you are on this kind of programme. The young engineer remembered a few classmates of his at the NOGIC JQS programme who never took the programme seriously and the eventual outcome was not favourable to them.

Balami stressed that the NOGIC JQS exposed him to the oil and gas industry and gave him a platform to soar. He added: “The NOGIC JQS is there to help us. Please, get registered. The selection process is free of abuse. You don’t need to know anyone to be part of the programme.”

For Balami and many others like him, the NOGIC JQS has served as the conveyor belt and the initiator of the professional trajectory in becoming oil and gas professionals. You might be the next beneficiary.

- **Dianam Dakolo**



Modular Refinery Initiative

NCDMB is partnering with Modular Refinery Operators to meet the need for local refining of petroleum products, create jobs and boost economic growth.

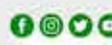
- Waltersmith's 5,000bpd modular refinery, Ibigwe, Imo State.
- Azikel Group's 12,000bpd hydro-skimming refinery, Polaku, Gbarain, Bayelsa State.
- Atlantic International Refinery's 2,000bpd, Brass, Bayelsa State.
- Duport's 2,500bpd modular refinery, Edo State.

Benefits:

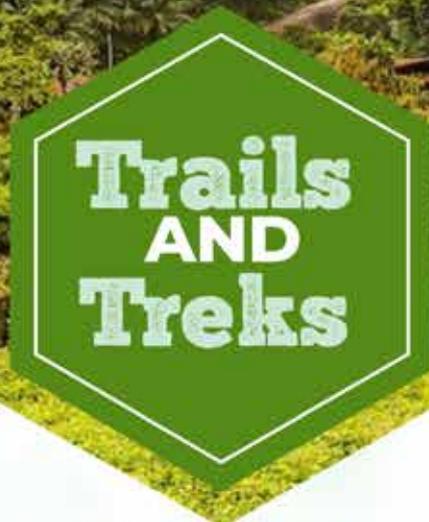
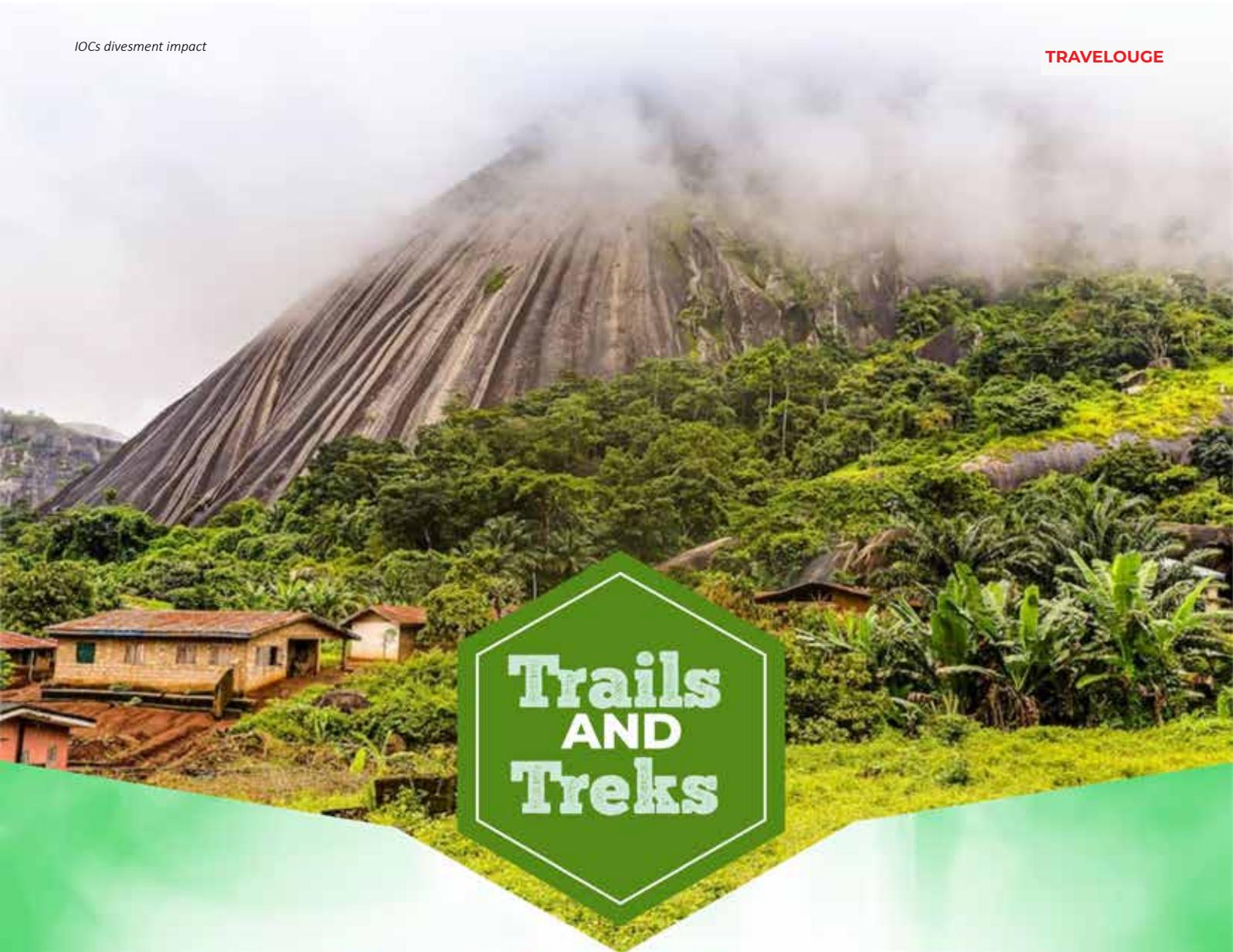
- Create 3,000 jobs in the refining value chain
- Add value to crude oil
- Grow domestic refining capacity
- Curb pipeline vandalism

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...Building local capacities in the Nigerian oil and gas industry.



Nigeria's hillsides are breathtaking shades of beauty

Nigeria, a land of breathtaking beauty and diverse landscapes, beckons travelers to explore its natural wonders. Among these treasures, the country boasts a collection of enchanting hills that offer some of the most rewarding hiking experiences in West Africa. These hills are more than just geological formations; they are gateways to adventure, opportunities to connect with nature, and a chance to bond with family and friends.

As we embark on this exploration, we will uncover the allure of Nigeria's hills, especially the advantages of hiking these picturesque terrains with your loved ones. From the towering Chappal Waddi in Taraba to the historic Kufena Hills in Kaduna and the captivating Shere Hills in Plateau, these destinations are not just about conquering heights, they are about creating memories that will last a lifetime.

But our journey does not stop here. We will also venture to the stunning Oke Idanre in Ondo and the mesmerising Rolling Hills of Okigwe in Imo, where you can enjoy the magic of these natural landscapes while strengthening the bonds of friendship and family.

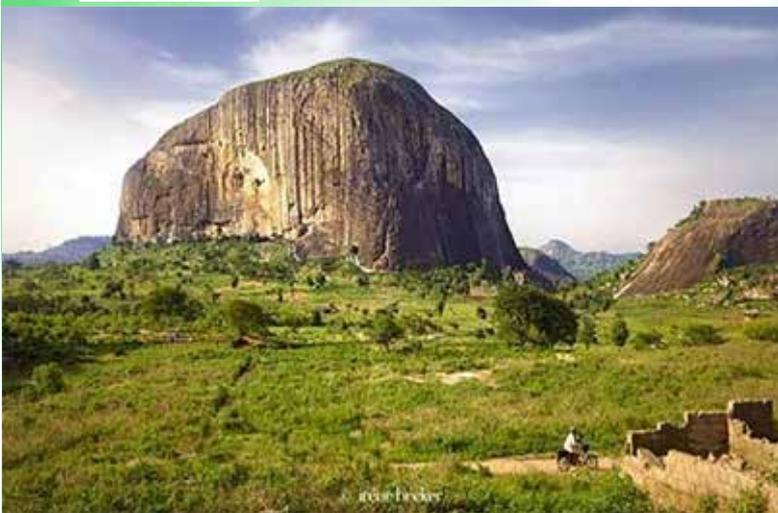
So, get ready to be awed by the scenic splendour and historical significance of these locations. Lace up your hiking boots, charge your cameras, bring along your loved ones, and prepare to be enthralled as we embark on an expedition through the diverse and spectacular land-

scapes of Nigeria.

NORTH-EAST: CHAPPAL WADDI MOUNTAIN, TARABA

Prepare for an exciting climb to Nigeria's highest peak, Chappal Waddi Mountain in Taraba, North-East. This mountain offers stunning vistas that will captivate your mind. While Chappal Waddi is sometimes called the "Mountain of Death" due to its rugged appearance, the experience is quite the opposite. This divine mountain is near the Cameroon border, on the edge of Gashaka Gumti Forest and within the Gashaka Gumti National Park in Taraba State's southern region.

When you catch your first glimpse of Chappal Waddi from the small village of Jauro Hammasale, it may seem daunting, but that feeling changes once you embark on the climb. Keep in mind that hiking Gangirwal (another name for the mountain) offers a timeless experience. As you traverse the rocky riverbed leading to the mountain, you will be greeted by fish swimming around your legs, welcoming you to their world. The forested pathway to the mountain is also home to a troop of monkeys, colobus, and a flock of birds that announce the presence of hikers. The ambiance is filled with the gentle sound of rustling leaves, gushing waterfalls, and the natural beauty of the mountain, all leading you to its summit.



While hiking alone can be exciting, sharing this adventure with family and friends is even more rewarding. Security is assured, but it is beneficial to connect with local guides and those who frequent the area. To ensure a fantastic experience, consider staying in rooms available in the southern sector. Some are self-catering, but you can also find delicious Nigerian dishes within the local community.

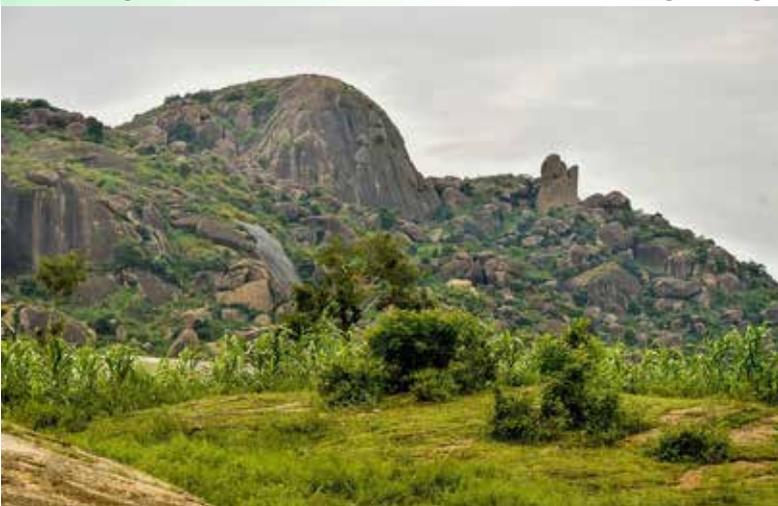
For maximum satisfaction, when planning a hike to West Africa's highest point, make sure to bring water, snacks, and money for purchasing meals and souvenirs. All of these elements will enhance your ability to conquer the "Mountain of Death."

NORTH-WEST: KUFENA HILLS, KADUNA

Kufena Hills, located in Kaduna, North-West Nigeria, are a collection of metamorphic rocks that serve as the foundation of this remarkable natural landscape. The terrain is characterised by a diverse ecosystem, abundant flora and fauna, and unique landforms. The base of the hills is surrounded by beautifully cropped farmlands, where animals graze.

The name "Kufena" is derived from the Kuphana word, connected to the Kufena community in Zaria, Kaduna. The hills hold historical significance as they are closely tied to the early settlement of the area. The hill's distinct features make it ideal for hiking, especially during the Wet Season when it transforms into a lush, green paradise.

For a fulfilling hike on Kufena Hills, a trip to the city of Zaria is the first step. To make the most of your experience, delve into the local knowledge and connect with the residents, who are welcoming and eager



to assist hikers. Do not forget your camera to capture the memorable moments.

NORTH-CENTRAL: SHERE HILLS, JOS, PLATEAU

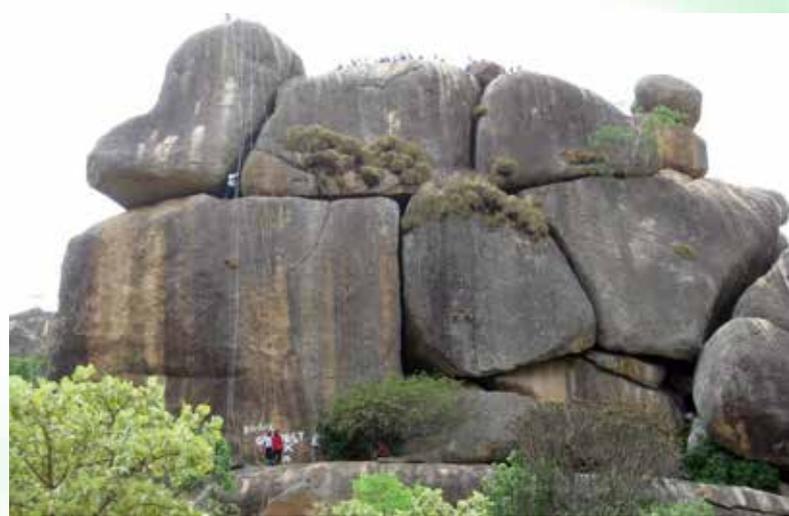
The city of Jos, located in the North-Central region of Nigeria, is renowned for its captivating landscapes. Shere Hills, nestled near the

heart of Jos, are among Plateau State's highest peaks, attracting mountain climbers, adventurers and campers. This incredible location offers breathtaking sights, including the Gog and the Maggog, some of the hill's highest points.

Shere Hills reach an impressive height of approximately 1,890 meters (6,001 feet) above sea level. The hills' peculiar structure features layers of rocks balanced precariously on top of one another, with smaller stones supporting massive boulders. Hiking on Shere Hills is relatively easy, thanks to the presence of a national park that organises and ensures a safe and enjoyable experience.

Hiking here is suitable for people of all ages, with even 75-year-old women familiar with the mountain's surroundings up to its peak. It is advisable to carry some extra cash for park fees and the possibility of tipping a guide for added assistance. Plateau State is known for its cool weather, be prepared with jackets, thick socks, head warmers, gloves and other hiking essentials.

While Shere Hills are on a safe location for hiking, it is still advisable to have a local guide accompany you for a more enriching experience.



After your hike, consider a picnic or a quiet dinner at the hills' peak. Do not forget your sunscreen and, of course, your camera to capture the beauty of the hills and the memorable moments of your excursion.

SOUTH-WEST: IDANRE HILLS, AKURE, ONDO

Idanre Hill, known locally as Oke Idanre, is one of the most stunning natural landscapes in Ondo State, South-West Nigeria. This picturesque location features diverse ecosystems of flora and fauna, including a special species of tailless animal called the hyrax and a community of monkeys that inhabit the hill.

Idanre Hill is not just a single mountain; it comprises several hills of varying heights and sizes. One of its unique attractions is the Ancient Palace located at the hill's peak, with its impressive courtyard, and the Aghagha hill, known for emitting smoke throughout the year. You will also find the Arun River, a mysterious water source originating from the hot confines of the Aghagha Hill, and the Old Town, a deserted ancient settlement.

To fully enjoy your experience at Oke Idanre, it is essential to coordinate with the park authorities and locals. The spiritual significance of the site requires respect for customs and traditions. Located about 24 kilometres southwest of Akure, Ondo State's capital, this natural wonder necessitates its visitors to follow certain guidelines in order to experience its rich history and tales. The weather in Ondo State can be unpredictable, so dressing appropriately and having essential hiking equipment, including water and a camera, is essential. For international visitors, hiring a local translator can enhance your experience.



Rolling Hills of Itu, Akwa Ibom

SOUTH-EAST: ROLLING HILLS OF OKIGWE, OKIGWE, IMO

For those in search of a hiking destination with breathtaking vistas, the Rolling Hills of Okigwe in South-East Nigeria should top their list. These hills present a striking and varied landscape, spreading from Ihube to Okigwe town. At the summit, you will be treated to a mesmerising view of lush greenery and the local community.

The Rolling Hills of Okigwe offer a wide range of activities for visitors – from hiking to sightseeing. To make the most of your visit, remember to consider the season, dress appropriately, and bring essential hiking equipment, including an umbrella. Engaging with the local residents can provide valuable insights into the region's history and culture. Ensure you have ample cash in hand for a fulfilling experience.

SOUTH-SOUTH: ROLLING HILLS OF ITU, ITU, AKWA IBOM

The Rolling Hills of Itu in Akwa Ibom, South-South Nigeria, provide an all-encompassing package of natural beauty. The topography includes a lush forest, palm groves, fertile farmland, and rugged valleys, offering breathtaking views from the summit down to its base.

Idanre Hills, Akure, Ondo



Rolling Hills of Okigwe, Imo

Locally known as Obot Itu, named after the community, the Itu Hills come with a river that holds historical significance, serving as a reminder of Nigeria's history and the transatlantic slave trade. This river was a major route for the slave trade, and remnants of the old jetty and even old prisons can still be found in the area.

In addition to its historical background, the Rolling Hills of Itu have connections to Mary Slessor, who championed various causes, including stopping the killing of twins. Hiking in this environment promises relaxation rather than stress, with various activities to enjoy. Plan to spend more than a day to ensure you fully savour all that this location has to offer. Be well-prepared with the necessary gear, as Akwa Ibom's weather can be both hot and rainy. Carrying an umbrella is a wise choice. Ensure you have enough local currency to cover your expenses when needed.

These magnificent natural locations in Nigeria offer a variety of experiences for hikers, adventurers, and nature enthusiasts. Each region has its unique charm and history waiting to be explored, making for memorable journeys.





NIGERIAN CONTENT INTERVENTION (NCI) FUND REPORT CARD

Initial NCI Fund size in 2017

US\$200m



Initial Products

- Manufacturing
- Loan Refinancing
- Asset Acquisition

Obligor Limit: US\$10m
Interest Rate: 8%



Contract Financing

Obligor Limit: US\$5m
Interest Rate: 8%



Community Contractors Financing

Obligor Limit: ₦20m
Interest Rate: 5%



18 months COVID-19 palliative:
April 1, 2020 - Dec 31, 2023

- * Interest rate reduced from 8% to 6%
- * Tenor of running loans extended by 18 months
- * Moratorium on principal repayment for maximum of 18 months



- Loan Disbursement
- Loan Repayment

- 100%
- 98%



Initial NCI Fund Size in 2017 (managed by Bol)

Increase of Fund size in June 2020 (managed by Bol)

US\$200m
to US\$350m



New Products with NEXIM Bank

- Matched in naira by NEXIM
- Women in Oil & Gas** and a counterpart fund from NEXIM
- Working Capital and Capacity building** and a counterpart fund from NEXIM

· US\$50m

· US\$20m

· US\$30m



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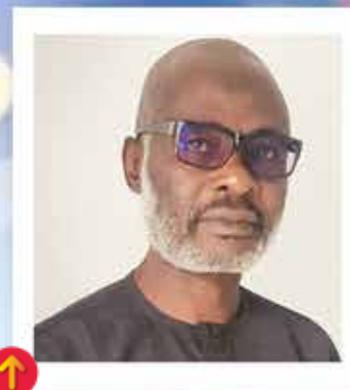
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RETIREMENT



Dr. Ginah Otonye Ginah, FNSE, immediate past General Manager, Corporate Communication and Zonal Coordination Division, NCDMB retired from the services of the Board in May 2023. He joined the Board in 2011 as Manager, Downstream in the Monitoring Directorate and was later elevated to General Manager, Board's Projects. His role was expanded in 2017 to cover Corporate Communication and Zonal Coordination Division. Dr. Ginah undertook several sensitisation workshops to enlighten Nigerian youths on the benefits of the NOGICD Act 2010 and how to participate in the Oil and Gas Sector. He championed the development of the Community Content Guideline and other several initiatives. We wish him happy retirement in good health.



Mr. Ghali Junaid Salihu, immediate past Manager, Facility in the Corporate Services and Logistics (CSL) retired in April. He joined the services of the Board in December 2013.



CHILD DEDICATION

Mr. Pius Waritimi, a Supervisor in the Monitoring & Evaluation Directorate and his wife, Mrs. Gloria Ifeoma Waritimi dedicated their son, Christopher Tamara-Pere on November 5, 2023, at the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Abundant Life Parish in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.



WEDDING

Engr. Kelsey Idaerefaa, an Officer in the Facility and Logistics Division, wedded his sweetheart, former Miss Ngozi Christabel Osere October 28, 2023 at the Gidam Parks & Gardens, Airport Road, Divine Power Church, Rukpoku, Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

SUCCESSION

Mr. Naboth Onyesoh Esq, Head, Directorate of Legal Services, has been announced as the Successor to the Director of Legal Services, **Barr. Muhammed Umar Babangida**.

Engr. Jefferson Tuatonga, General Manager, Upstream, Directorate of Monitoring & Evaluation, has been announced as the Successor to the Director of Monitoring & Evaluation, **Mr. Akintunde Adelana**.



REDEPLOYMENT

Ms. Chidima Adiele, former Manager, SERVICOM, Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate, NCDMB has been reassigned as the Manager, Human Resources.

Ms. Seleke-Ere Owoupele, formerly in the Projects Certification and Authorisation Directorate, has been reassigned as Manager, SERVICOM, Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate.

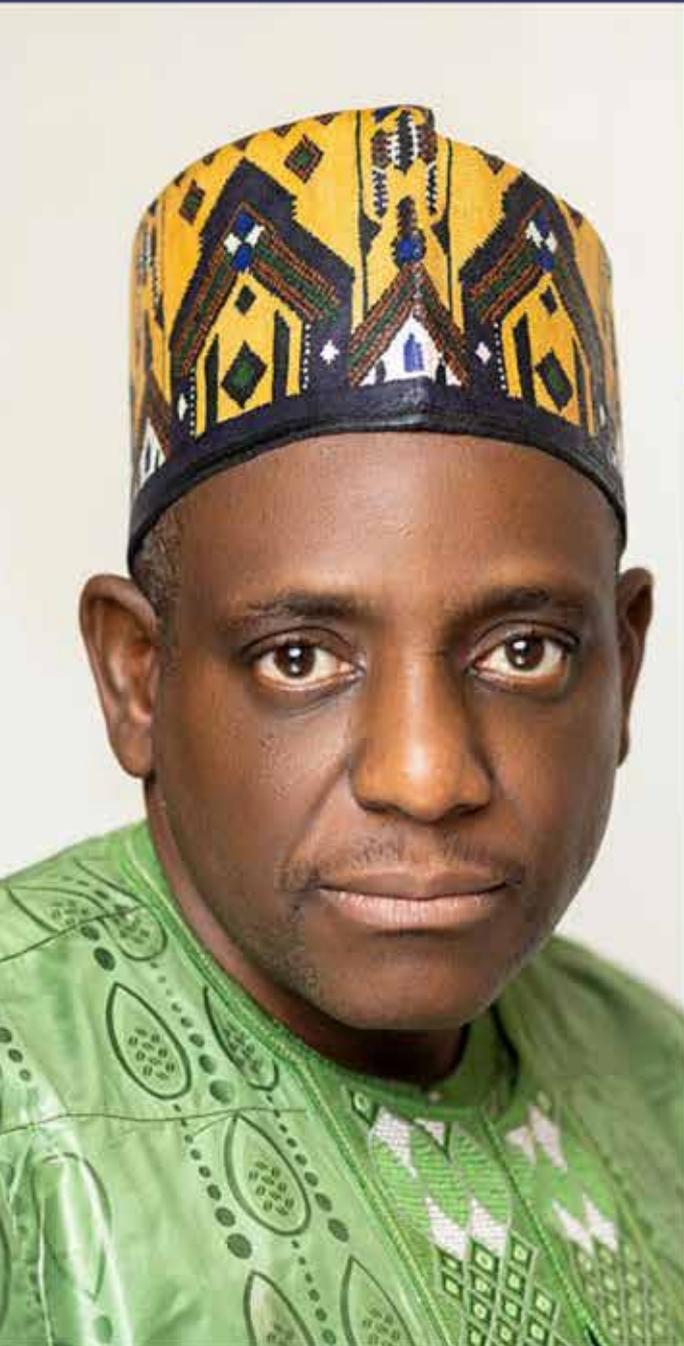
Ms. Doris Opuwari, former Acting General Manager, Human Resource has been redeployed to the Capacity Building Directorate as a Manager.

GOLF

Engr. Tony Attah, former Managing Director, Nigeria LNG Limited; Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote, Executive Secretary, NCDMB and diplomats at the 2023 Nigerian Oil and Gas Energy Week Golf Tournament sponsored by the NCDMB at the IBB Golf Course, Abuja

Imperative of Nigeria Promoting African Local Content Agenda

By Abdulmalik Halilu



Nigeria adopted the Local Content programme in the oil and gas industry on the basis that we are a hydrocarbon-rich country with 37 billion barrels of crude oil and over 200 trillion standard cubic feet of gas. We have the resource base to actually mobilise and position ourselves for the Local Content programme.

In the course of implementing the programme, we discovered that when you build capacity and you are not able to optimise the capacity to above 90 percent utilisation, there is a problem. You have to continually sustain a pipeline of projects that will keep the supply chain active. We also realised that some of the very critical investments that we wanted to attract to Nigeria were being limited by the fact that the volume of transactions in Nigeria is not sufficient to justify an investment decision, because economies of scale is very important.

Now, if you look at 37 billion barrels of crude oil reserves compared to 125 billion barrels of reserves across Africa, you can see the difference. It was important for us to look at Africa as a market.

How we came up with the African Local Content Roundtable

The Executive Secretary of NCDMB, Engr. Simbi Kesiye Wabote came up with the idea of why we needed to have a Local Content Roundtable that brings all African countries together to discuss a major agenda. We set out in June 2021. We held the maiden edition of the African Local Content Roundtable in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State.

The intention was actually to sensitise other African countries on how local content has worked for Nigeria. But then, the need arose for us to expand the market base, expand the supplier base, and for us to share the experience of Nigeria in terms of the policy imperatives for local content and some of the benefits that will come to Africa if everybody embraced local content. Fortunately for us, we got the support of the African Petroleum Producers Organisation (APPO). They came to Bayelsa and they listened to us. The interesting outcome of that event was that they asked the Executive Secretary to allow them to take over the Annual African Local Content Roundtable.



And as usual – because we were very sure of the brand that we presented – the Executive Secretary agreed to that recommendation. We had another one in Angola, where we also showcased what we can do as Africa. Most African countries started embracing the model. This event is a third of the Local Content programme. You can see the significant increase in the number of participation and the interest that has been showcased.

The outcome of this year's African Local Content Roundtable

We structured the programme for this year to actually look at the different elements that aid sustainable local content - the regulatory framework (how do we have a pan-African approach to local content?), discussions around having a common template on Local Content implementation in Africa, the kind of policy instruments that we can put in place. Some have regulations, some have enabling laws.

We shared very insightful perspectives. Some companies that benefitted from local content came out to say that because the law protected them, they were able to put their money where their mouth was, and they are reaping the benefits.

We also looked at the financial aspect of the oil and gas industry – finance is imperative as a success pillar in Local Content. We looked at the opportunities for financing, the existing constraints and the need for us to mobilise resources within Africa to actually support the Local Content programme.

We further looked at the technology imperatives on local content, because you cannot be talking about local content if you do not have the requisite technology ecosystem. Research and Development (R&D) is what drives technology. That was also discussed. It was amplified that for us to succeed, in terms of domiciling technology, we need to have innovation culture within Africa.

This is what makes countries like the United States of America, Switzerland, and Sweden leaders. These are the top three countries in terms of innovation, simply because they embraced innovation culture. It

is private sector-led and government is supporting it. But most importantly, they

The emphasis was on collaboration with NCDMB and other partners.

Also, there is the need for us to have a database of skills available within Africa so that mobility of labour across African countries will be more structured, predictive, so that we can easily simplify and displace the expatriates that are currently working in the industry, that are coming from Western economies, because we now have a database that can actually pool resources.

put infrastructure in place to support innovation. That was also amplified.

The role of human capital was also well amplified. You cannot talk about local content if you do not have the right skills, if you do not have vocational centres that that can actually develop the requisite manpower. We are able to bring Petroleum Technology Development Fund (PTDF), which is a partner sister agency that is also developing the manpower needs of the oil and gas industry, to the room. They were able to showcase some of the things they do.

The emphasis was on collaboration with NCDMB and other partners. Also, there is the need for us to have a database of skills available within Africa so that mobility of labour across African countries will be more structured, predictive, so that we can easily simplify and displace the expatriates that are currently working in the industry, that are coming from Western economies, because we now have a database that can actually pool resources.

We looked at storytelling - about those companies that have actually benefitted from local content in Nigeria to tell their story. We had Project 100 Companies talking about the various financial and non-financial interventions that have been put in place by NCDMB to propel them. Today, we heard how Project 100 Companies are doing business in Ghana, Equatorial Guinea, Uganda, Angola, and so on.

We had very good testimonies. And it showed that from an idea that was conceived on the desk of the

Executive Secretary, we were able to create business opportunities for our companies outside Nigeria. That is the essence of a pan-African approach to local content.

But most importantly, we also looked at the need for us to have a synergy, in terms of capacity building programmes, among our African peers, the need for us to have collaboration among institutions. For instance, we do a lot of collaboration with institutions in the West and our own research centres. But we discovered that we did not have much within African institutions. The need to do that collaborative research, peer review, exchange programmes, was also discussed.

What is key is that the outcomes and recommendations that came out of these events, for instance, were very insightful. For instance, there were recommendations on simplifying the need for visa requirements across African countries, because that is what really stimulates business. We also discussed the need for us to look at logistics of having to travel from Nigeria to other countries and from other countries to Nigeria.

The conclusion was that Local Content should not just restrict itself to petroleum industry. We should look at other sectors of the economy. If you are talking about visa now, you are talking about Interior, you are talking about Transportation, you are talking about the transport sector. That sectoral approach is also part of the discussion.

Next Steps

There is going to be a meeting of ministers of APPO member-countries. The communique from this Roundtable will be presented. We will get the endorsement for implementation and, hopefully, by next year, we are going to present the scorecard.

This was what was discussed this year; this is what has been achieved. We are able to track the progress made, in terms of implementation of ideas that have been presented. That way, we are making it a result-driven Roundtable.

Abdulmalik Halilu is the Director, Planning, Research and Statistics, at the NCDMB





INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ALLOCATI AT THE NCDMB NIGERIAN OIL AND EMEYAL-1 OGBIA LGA IN BAYELSA STA

Site Pictures: NCDMB NOGaPS site, Emeyal-1, Bayelsa State

The Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB) was established by the Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry Content Development (NOGICD) Act of 2010 as the sole agency of Government responsible for supervising, coordinating, administering, monitoring, and managing the development of Nigerian Content in the Oil and Gas industry.

In line with her key mandate of developing local capacities and capabilities as enshrined in Section 70(h) of the NOGICD Act, the Board established the Nigerian Oil and Gas Park Scheme (NOGaPS) as a low-cost manufacturing hub for equipment, component parts, spare parts, chemicals, consumables etc.

Construction work at the NOGaPS sites at Emeyal-1, near Otueke in Bayelsa State and at Odukpani, Cross River State is near completion and both sites are scheduled to commence operations in first half of 2023.

The Emeyal1 and Odukpani NOGaPS sites are both located on flat, well drained land of size 24 hectares and 25 hectares respectively and they are both equipped with high quality infrastructure and facilities such as:

- 24/7 uninterrupted power supply
- Internal road network with drainage
- Water treatment/supply plant
- Effluent water treatment plant
- Administrative Building Block
- Mini-Park Estate/Hostel Blocks
- Capacity Training Centre
- Security/Gatehouse
- Fire Station and many more

In view of the planned commencement of operation for 4th quarter of 2022, the Board hereby invite's interested reputable existing and new manufacturers to be part of this success story by setting up and carrying out their operations on the NOGaPS sites.

The Emeyal-1 site layout and some pictures showing the state of completion of the internal roads, drainages, administrative building, hostel, manufacturing shopfloor/warehouse, Capacity Training Center, etc are shown below.



Plot No	Description	Plot Size (m ²)
NBY08	Manufacturing Shop Floor 2	5,440
NBY09	Manufacturing Shop Floor 1	13,200
NBY10	Manufacturing Shop Floor 1	13,442
NBY11	Manufacturing Shop Floor 1	12,510
NBY12	Manufacturing Shop Floor 1	11,493,34
NBY14	Manufacturing Shop Floor 1	12,744,80
NBY17	Manufacturing Shop Floor 1	12,717,57
NBY19	Manufacturing Shop Floor 1	11,421,77
NBY20	Manufacturing Shop Floor 1	12,484,13
NBY21	Manufacturing Shop Floor 1	12,440
NBY24	Manufacturing Shop Floor 2	7,437,51
NBY25	Manufacturing Shop Floor 2	7,437,51
NBY26	Manufacturing Shop Floor 2	7,437,51
NBY27	Manufacturing Shop Floor 2	7,437,51

ON OF SERVICED PLOTS FOR MANUFACTURING GAS PARK SCHEME (NOGAPS) LOCATED AT TE AND AT ODUKPANI IN CROSS RIVER STATE



Site Pictures:
NCDMB NOGAPS
site, Odukpani,
Cross River
State.

The Odukpani site layout and some pictures showing the state of completion of the internal roads, drainages, administrative building, hostel, manufacturing shopfloor/warehouse, Capacity Training Center, etc are shown below.

Plot No	Description	Plot Size (m ²)
NCR05	Manufacturing Shop Floor 1	12,730
NCR06	Manufacturing Shop Floor 1	12,770
NCR07	Manufacturing Shop Floor 1	13,818
NCR08	Manufacturing Shop Floor 1	10,563
NCR09	Manufacturing Shop Floor 1	11,358
NCR10	Manufacturing Shop Floor 2	9,605
NCR11	Manufacturing Shop Floor 2	9,551
NCR14	Manufacturing Shop Floor 3	5,167
NCR15	Manufacturing Shop Floor 3	5,100
NCR16	Manufacturing Shop Floor 3	5,020
NCR17	Manufacturing Shop Floor 3	4,800
NCR021	Manufacturing Shop Floor 1	10,441
NCR022	Manufacturing Shop Floor 1	10,448
NCR023	Manufacturing Shop Floor 1	13,086
NCR024	Manufacturing Shop Floor 1	13,400



Interested manufacturers and investors should submit application for plot allocation to the Board with the following:

- Cover letter addressed to the Executive Secretary of NCDMB with clear indication of the Plot no. of interest
- Evidence of CAC registration
- Company profile/brochure
- Outline of the proposed manufacturing activities: machinery, raw materials, personnel, layout with plot size, schedule, and any other relevant information.

Intending subscribers should note that available plots will be allocated on a first-come-first-served basis.

Shortlisted allottees will be invited for a meeting with the Board to make presentation and further discuss details of their proposal and the terms and condition of the allocation.

Signed
Manager, Corporate Communications
For: Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board (NCDMB)





NCDMB

Champion

in Ease of Doing Business in Nigeria in 2022/23

Awarded by

**Presidential Enabling Business
Environment Council**

...Building local capacities in the Nigeria oil and gas industry.

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