



## NATIONAL LIBRARY OF NIGERIA

WELCOME ADDRESS OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARIAN/CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, PROFESSOR CHINWE VERONICA ANUNOBI AT THE ANNUAL READERSHIP PROMOTION CAMPAIGN FOR NORTH-CENTRAL ZONE WITH THE THEME: "READING AS A PANACEA FOR SOCIETAL PROBLEMS" HOLDING ON THIS DAY 27<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2022.

### *Protocol*

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you all to this remarkable occasion of the Annual Readership Promotion Campaign (RPC) of the National Library of Nigeria which forms part of the statutory mandates of the Apex library of the Nation. RPC is a call on all Nigerians to embrace the habit of reading in order to eradicate the rate of illiteracy in Nigeria.

The annual Readership Promotion Campaign was flagged off by the Hon. Minister of Education on 15<sup>th</sup> September, 2022 at the Conference Hall Federal Ministry of Education. Today, the RPC is being held at the North Central Zone which comprises: Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger and Plateau.

The Campaign is designed to awaken reading consciousness among Nigerians by way of promoting the availability and use of good reading materials by all and sundry as well as collectively seek solutions to the obstacles to reading culture in Nigeria. This engagement will take place in all the Thirty Six {36} States of the Federation including the Federal Capital Territory {FCT} Abuja, with

a focus on donation of books and other materials to Primary/ Secondary Schools as well as other vulnerable groups in support of their learning. We are here today to actualize one of such programs hence providing such platform to share our thoughts with you as well as encourage our young readers while doffing our hats for the Chief  
Moi Anjwa, Gwani Sulamen Tsangaya Gwani Layi  
..... Who played host to us during our campaign in ..... Village.

This year's campaign is expected to impact on the indigenous people- "the Hard to Reach" Thus, it is being held in the hinterlands where out of school children which was put at 20million by UNESCO as well as the uneducated adults and internally displaced people are found (Thus we are partnering with Chief.....of .....Village). When we say *Hard-to-Reach*, we are not only talking about geographical spaces, but language barriers. It is worthy of note that reading does not necessary mean reading only in English. Reading must also include learning to read and write in mother tongues. So we are taking the campaign to royal palaces, to meet the royal fathers who will galvanize support by identifying volunteers, which will drive the project in those communities. The campaign is not expected to be flash in the pan, whereby once we turn our backs, the project will end. Accordingly, we have provided these communities with whiteboards, markers, writing materials and basic reading materials, in other to engender basic literacy skills. It is time to help our children, adult and the excluded to be included. They will be encouraged to learn the basics of reading in their mother language; they must appreciate and be able to recognize their geographical location as well as other basic literacy and numeracy. This move is expected to serve as a spring board to community book clubs which the National Library will nurture in due course.



Considering the need for inclusiveness and desire to address the national problems such as Yahoo boys, 419, get-rich quick syndrome, banditry, suicide bombing, terrorism, insecurity, mental degeneration, misinformation, fake news etc which are the outcome of lack of reading, this year's theme was chosen to be "**Reading as a Panacea for Societal Problems.**" The intention is to address seemingly unconcerned majority of us uninterested in reading from the grassroots and to educate us on the importance of reading which will surely address the mentioned vices. It is expected as encapsulated in the theme that Reading will bridge the gap between: the uninformed and the informed, the excluded and the included, the aware and the unaware, the acclaimed scholars and the yet to be tutored, the rich and the poor, the rural and the urban, the freeborn and the cast, the leader and the follower, the master and the servant, the employer and the intending employee. Kick starting reading habit in a Nigerian out there, will surely address his personal, educational, sociopolitical, security and economic concerns. It is therefore necessary that the move to encourage a good and enhance reading culture must be all encompassing. What is good for the geese is good for the gander. How can we neglect such an important part of the nation's populace and of course a major sector of our economy?

We must appreciate that a strong reading culture enhances independence, leadership and confidence. It reinforces developed and developing important academic skill that is needed to acquire knowledge and understanding in school and is fundamental to lifelong learning. Furthermore, it is a key component of social and emotional development. As the saying goes, "the more you read, the more you know and the more you know, the more you grow", Reading improves

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emotional intelligence; engender global tour, self-awareness, and a stepping stone to self actualization.

Therefore, to achieve all inclusive sustainable development that revolves around the 17 Sustainable Development Goals particularly SDG4 that centred on education, Nigeria must put reading at the top of her priority. This goes to reaffirm that enhanced reading culture is a prerequisite for acquisition of knowledge and skills needed by all people in a rapidly changing world serving as the catalyst for participation in social, cultural, political and economic activities of the Nation. Lack of reading culture is considered absurd and inimical to the growth and development of Nigeria, especially its nascent democracy.

For the avoidance of doubt and for the information of the uninformed, the benefits of reading continue to expand beyond our share imagination. This includes among others: Reading

- Reduces stress and engenders relaxation;
- Improves concentration and averts memory loss ( Alzheimer);
- Expands vocabulary and strengthens writing abilities;
- Widens horizon and boosts knowledge/wisdom;
- Increases imagination and creativity;
- Helps widen and increase critical thinking capabilities;
- Provides sound intellect.

Let me reiterate that a reading nation is a moving nation and a country whose citizenry hardly reads stands at the edge of a precipice awaiting a colossal fall. The habit of reading is speedily approaching freezing point in Nigeria in general, and the hinter lands particular. It is worthy to note that no individual will be left behind in this voyage of attaining inclusive growth and development. Every Nigeria is as important as the other thus needs to read, learn and grow. To connect and build informed citizenry, the National Library

of Nigeria will never rest on her oars towards ensuring a reading nation, for a reading nation is a leading nation. Show me a good leader and I will tell he is a reader.

Let us join hand to ensure you that every Nigerian reads a book, a sentence in mother tongue or English language.

At this point I need to remind our host in .....Village, Chief.....that a new dawn is ushered into your village. The making of great village, city or town starts small. Do not allow this candle we light in your village to extinguish, help us to help you. We are available to play our own part, so endeavor to do yours. To our young readers some of who will excel in reading today please do not renege in reading for a reader is a leader. Today is your opportunity to build your great tomorrow. For the teachers and volunteers I enjoin you, gird your loins and aid our future by supporting our today people to read.

God bless you as you join hands to eliminate this monster of poor reading culture.