



NATIONAL LIBRARY OF NIGERIA

KEYNOTE ADDRESS OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARIAN/CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, PROFESSOR CHINWE VERONICA ANUNOBI AT THE 2023 ANNUAL READERSHIP PROMOTION CAMPAIGN FOR ALL ZONES WITH THE THEME: READ YOUR WAY TO THE TOP ON 28TH SEPTEMBER, 2023.

PROTOCOLS

I am delighted to welcome you all to this promising occasion of the Annual Readership Promotion Campaign (RPC) of the National Library of Nigeria which forms part of her mandate. RPC is an intervention to awaken the consciousness of all Nigerians to embrace the habit of reading with a view to eradicating illiteracy in Nigeria.

The Campaign is a continuous programme which takes place in all the Thirty Six {36} States of the Federation including the Federal Capital Territory {FCT} Abuja. Since 1980 when the programme was first inaugurated, the National Library has remained focused on the aims which among others include:

- inculcating reading habit for lifelong learning beyond reading for examinations, promotions and interview purposes;
- encouraging reading for sustainable growth and development ;

- ensuring the provision of books and other reading materials in number and variety, relevant to our culture and situation;
- identifying problems that militate against the development of good reading habit; and
- initiating interventions that will eliminate obstacles to reading.

This age long aim could be regarded as a foretaste of the SDG No.4 which focuses on inclusive equitable quality education for lifelong learning opportunities. Education of this sort cannot be achieved where 20 million Nigerians are illiterate (they cannot read or write). It would have been staggering if the National Library and other development partners have not embraced these laudable programmes and supports.

Last year, the campaign was taken to the hinterland, locations described in library and information parlance as '***the hard to reach***'. During these campaigns, books, tablets and writing materials were distributed to Primary/Secondary Schools and vulnerable groups in support of their learning in at least 36 Local Government Areas in Nigeria while literacy centers were also established. Volunteers were further engaged to continuously educate the rural communities on the art of reading for continuity and sustainability. The feedback from these engagements are tremendously encouraging. The recipients of the Centers always demonstrate great excitement and readiness to develop their learning abilities. It is noteworthy that in the year 2022, the program impacted on over 11,687(Eleven Thousand, Six Hundred and Eighty-seven) students which includes boys and girls, 102 secondary schools as well as male and female adults.

As part of our efforts to encourage and deepen reading habit, the National Library has within the year donated One Thousand Eight Hundred and Fifty- five(1,855) volumes in One Thousand, Seven Hundred and Forty(1,740) titles of reading materials to 16 primary, secondary and higher institutions . This is out of 46 institutions that made request for reading materials support.

While we continue to vary our approach to this campaign within the limits of our resources, this year's campaign with the theme '**Read Your Way to the Top**' is strategically designed to focus on reading competitions amongst students of Junior Secondary Schools across the Nation. It will be another block placed on the foundation of last year's campaign to impact the hinterlands where we could reach out of school children. The effort is still insisting on inclusivity and equitable quality education as well as promotion of lifelong learning opportunities.

Ladies and gentlemen. It is stating the obvious that reading culture in Nigeria has been on the decline over the years. The reasons are not unconnected with limited /lack access to books & inadequate educational resources; and preference for other forms of entertainment (social media) as well as parental and other institutional factors. Let us reminiscence that young boy or girl who is at the remotest part of Nigeria where there is no electricity, internet, smart phones, television, and inspirational reading materials with limited or sometimes unqualified teachers. Yet he/she aspires for higher positions even to be the President of Nigeria. For him/her books are only those used by their teachers. How can we help them? Where is the inclusivity? National Library is poised within our limited resources to bring them into the world of knowledge as packaged in books since, Audrey Azoulay (UNESCO Director-General) noted that Books are vital

vehicles for accessing, transmitting and promoting education, science, culture and information worldwide.

I need not over-emphasize that our children and youth should be encouraged to jettison social media and read since Independent reading leads to an increased volume of reading; The more one reads, the better one reads; The more one reads, the more knowledge of words and language one acquires; The more one reads, the more fluent one becomes; The more one reads, the easier it becomes to sustain the mental effort necessary to comprehend complex situations. The more one reads, the more one learns about the people and happenings of our world.

We enjoin stakeholders and well-meaning Nigerians to join the National Library through some of these engagements:

Establishment of community/public libraries, promotion of reading clubs, providing reading materials that will be distributed, Supporting National Library reading promotion programs, encouraging parents to read to their children, leveraging technology. You as individual can tell the story of reading and how it has impacted your life. Do begin the habit of gifting people books.

I want to emphasize here that the National Library of Nigeria will never rest on her oars until she achieves a reading nation, for a reading nation is a leading and developed nation. We are open to collaboration with stakeholders in the world of reading as well as concerned citizens of this Country to achieve a reading Nigeria.

This address will not be complete without registering my profound appreciation to the Minister of Education Prof Tahir Mammam, the Minister of States for Education, Dr Yusuf Tanko Sununu and the Permanent Secretary Dr Andrew Adejo for their unwavering support

towards the success of the National Library activities. The National Library of Nigeria is quite aware of the precious place the government of His Excellency Bola Ahmed Tinubu GCFR places on Education through the '**Renewed Hope Agenda**', the National Library of Nigeria appreciates all these efforts of Mr. President and will connect to his agenda to ensure that Nigeria becomes a reading Nation.

I want to also sincerely thank the Managing Director, Havilah Group for donating N50m (Fifty Million Naira) worth of books to the National Library of Nigeria as gifts to both Primary and Secondary Schools throughout the country during the 2023 Readership Promotion Campaign.

Also, we thank TETFUND for their support towards the 2023 Readership Promotion Campaign Flag-off.

I welcome you all again, thank you for coming and God bless.