



NATIONAL LIBRARY OF NIGERIA

WELCOME ADDRESS OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARIAN/CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, PROFESSOR CHINWE VERONICA ANUNOBI AT THE FLAG-OFF OF THE 2023 ANNUAL READERSHIP PROMOTION CAMPAIGN HOLDING AT THE MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ROOM OF THE FEDERAL MINISTRY OF EDUCATION ON 20TH JUNE, 2023.

The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education

Directors- General of Agencies/CEO under Ministry of Education,

Directors of Ministries,

Development Partners,

Members of the Fourth Estate,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to welcome you all to this promising occasion of the flag-off 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, which are 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 quality education inclusivity and equality for lifelong learning opportunities. Education of this sort cannot be achieved where 20 million Nigerians are the 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 are 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 are also established. Volunteers are further engaged to continuously educate the rural communities on the art of reading with a view to ensuring continuity and sustainability. The feedback from these engagements is 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 4000 people comprising of secondary school children, male and female adults as well as 102 secondary schools.

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 inclusiveness and equitable quality education as well as promotion of lifelong learning opportunities.

One of Arise News Channel mantra is 'Knowledge is Power and Information is the Currency'. You will all agree with me that you are where you are today because either you are compelled to read by your guardian or that you saw great achievers and understood that they are because they read. Thus you struggled to emulate them. Show me a great man in the making and I will tell you he or she is a reader. Crowns are cast in crucibles and often this crucible is knowledge which is bought with the currency -Information. Thus whoever is down and hidden could be unveiled when he source for information hidden in written materials for knowledge sake. Therefore we are desirous of ensuring equal opportunity for all to attain exulted position in Nigeria by insisting that the low, the high and mighty are reading, for out of ignorance my people perish.

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 farfetched including though not limited to lack of access to books, inadequate educational resources and a preference for other forms of entertainments (social media) as well parental and other institutional factors. Let us reminiscence that young boy or girl who is at the

remotest part of Nigeria: 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 emphasis the position that we must encourage our children and youth to jettison social media and read because:

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 need to support the efforts of the 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 benefited you. Do begin the habit of gifting people books.

I want to emphasis 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.

No wonder we will today appreciate ambassadors who have been at the fore front of supporting the National Library to ensure we actualize our mandate to connect and build informed citizenry.

Ladies and gentlemen, before the Readership Promotion Campaign is flagged off, permit me to profoundly express my appreciation to the former Minister of Education, the former Minister of States for Education and the Permanent Secretary Mr Andrew David Adejo for their unwavering support towards 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 NLN appreciates all these efforts of Mr President and will connect to his agenda to ensure that Nigeria becomes a reading Nation.

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