

## Illiteracy Among Less Privileged Children Worries Mrs Amaechi

Wife of the Rivers State Governor Judith Amaechi has decried the high rate of school drop out and illiteracy level among the less privilege children.

Mrs Amaechi stated this during the flag off of the Empowerment Support Initiative (ESI) rural nursery school in Tai local government area of Rivers State.

She stated that the level of school drop-outs among less-privilege children will pose a major societal challenge if not checked.

According to her "the level of illiteracy among the less privilege children is quite worrisome, this situation may instigate societal vices and the children will imbibe wrong values when they grow if it is not checked".

The governor's wife who also visited the palace of the Gbenemene Tai to solicit the support of the traditional institution in arresting the situation said the ESI nursery schools will be devoid of all forms of political interference.

"This situation among less privilege children is pitiable and all hands must be on desk to ensure the success of the scheme" she lauded the determination of both the Federal and State Government in ensuring that the policy of universal primary education will be executed, but added that the objectives may not be achievable if the minds of the children between the ages of 3 - 6 years are not properly moulded. "The universal primary education seeks to ensure that Nigerians get basic education ahead of 2015 but we must prepare the minds of the pupils to ensure that we achieve the education development goals of our desire", Mrs Amaechi while in Tai also commissioned a water project at Korokoro Tai and inspected on going projects.

Earlier in her speech wife of the Chairman of Tai council area Patience Mpigi stated that ESI Initiative will set a bench mark for advancing standard of education and bridge the bridge between the

urban and rural children. She added that the scheme will also provide over 30 employment opportunities for Tai people.

In his welcome remark the Chairman of Tai Council area Barry Mpigi described the rural nursery school initiative as a worthy development capable of fast tracking the actualization of the Millennium Development Goals.

"The ESI nursery education is a welcome development that will fast track the actualization of the MDGs, the Tai people commend the effort and will whole heartedly embrace effort that will guarantee the success in the interest of our children".

The ESI nursery school which was flag off formally in Bonny local government intends to establish 319 Schools across the wards. Already over 20 nursery schools have begun academic programme.



Lady Judith Amaechi

## RSG Wants NNPC'S Partnership In Building New Schools

Rivers State Government has called on the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) to partner with the state in the building of its new Model Secondary Schools of international standard.

Governor Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi made the call today while receiving the Group Managing Director of NNPC Alhaji Mohammed Sanusi Barkindo and other senior Managers of the corporation on a courtesy visit at Government House, Port Harcourt.

Governor Amaechi urged the NNPC to join other cooperate bodies already collaborating with the state government to achieve the objective, noting that 23 of such secondary schools are to be built in the state at the cost of N3.5billion each.

According to the governor, "some banks are also partnering with us on 60/40 basis, but we think that NNPC can build one, and we appeal to you to honour us by accepting to build one of the schools since we are investing in security to make your operation smooth".

The State Chief Executive, said the state government decided to invest in education to produce better qualified graduates that would become employable and therefore reduce the population of those that may take to criminality.

Governor Amaechi assured the Group Managing Director that his administration is determined to do its best in terms of providing security, despite being a federal responsibility, because the impact is felt by people of the state.

He used the opportunity to appeal to the federal government to treat states according to the quantity of their production and contribution to the National economy to make the people happy, noting that the state is the highest producer of crude in the country and also produces the highest amount of Gas in the country, yet it is not fairly treated.

Speaking earlier, the Group Managing Director of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) Alhaji Mohammed Sanusi Barkindo, lauded Governor Amaechi for what he described as his extra-ordinary effort in ensuring the security of NNPC personnel and facilities in the state.

The Group Managing Director, who said they were in the state on inspection of NNPC facilities, noted that without the effort of the state government, it would have been impossible for NNPC personnel to operate any of their facilities, and pledged the support of the NNPC to partner with the Rivers State Government in developing the state.

He also called for Federal Government recognition of such uncommon nationalistic zeal as exemplified by the Rivers State Government, by assisting the state because of the cost implication of its routine security operation, on the treasury of the state.

Rivers State, he said, by virtue of its position in oil and gas production will remain the industrial hub, not only in Nigeria, but the entire gulf of Guinea, and thanked the Rivers State Government for the hospitality accorded them.

## RSG To Employ Hardworking Corps Doctors

### ...As NYSC Swears-In 2420 Corpers

Rivers State Government says it would employ medical doctors, among serving corps members, who are found to be dedicated and hard working, to work in its primary health centres.

Governor Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi gave this indication today during the swearing-in ceremony of 2009 batch 'A' corps members deployed to Rivers State, at the NYSC Permanent Orientation Camp, Nonwa/Gbam.

Governor Amaechi who also read President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua's address, commended the corps members for their discipline in camp, noting that the orientation affords them the avenue to internalize the ideals of the scheme, which is expected to foster cooperation and understanding among them.

According to him, "the years ahead will present you with a number of challenges as you are required to play a pivotal role in critical areas of National concern, such as mass literacy,

entrepreneurship development and campaign against HIV/AIDS pandemic", emphasizing that the corps members should resolve to move the nation forward.

He said the Federal Government is aware of the enormous challenges which the National Youth Service Corps scheme is faced with, and promised to deploy more resources towards strengthening the scheme by enhancing its capacity to enable corps members maximize their creative and innate potentials.

The President challenged the corps members to see themselves as vanguards of positive change and development in the communities of their primary assignment, and urged them to fully integrate into the host communities by identifying with their culture, customs and their aspirations.

Also speaking, the Chairman of the state NYSC Governing Board and Secretary to the State Government, Mr. Magnus Abe, said on assumption of office by the present administration,

the scheme in the state was in need of urgent assistance and thanked the state Governor for upgrading facilities at the camp, and payment of the backlog of allowances to corps members.

Mr. Abe urged the corps members to explore the state, and promised that the State Government would help to make the service year memorable for them, adding that by the time they conclude, they should have been prepared to go into the outside world.

Earlier, the State Coordinator of NYSC, Mrs. Gloria Obioha, said a total of 2,420 prospective corps members were deployed to Rivers State, noting that the camp programmes have been updated to meet the aims and objective of the scheme.

Mrs. Obioha, commended the State Governor for the tremendous assistance the scheme has received in the state, particularly the recent renovation of the entire camp and the prompt payment of corps members



Governor Chibuike Amaechi of Rivers State signing the visitors book at the swearing-in ceremony of Batch A 2009 Corps members while Mrs Gloria Obioha State Coordinator of the NYSC watches

## Economic Meltdown: Amaechi Suggests Way Out

Rivers State Governor, Rt. Hon Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi has called for the diversification of the Nigerian economy as a way of reducing the effects of the economic meltdown on the citizenry.

Governor Chibuike Amaechi made the call as Guest Speaker at the 2009 Press Week Public Lecture of the Lagos State Council of the Nigeria Union of Journalists at the Airport Hotel in Lagos.

The governor who spoke on the theme: "Emerging Markets in the Age of Global Economic Meltdown", said that as an emerging economy, there was the need for Nigeria to look at other areas where it can generate markets and invest in them.

"It is my strong view that as emerging economies like Nigeria adjusts to the economic meltdown, they should take opportunity of the crisis to diversify their economies", he said, noting that "if we had invested heavily in gas as we did in oil, it would have been an advantage now".

He contended that although the economic meltdown was already bearing its pangs on key areas of the national economy, there was still the need to see diversification into other areas as a way out of the economic crisis.

He lamented the incidences of salary cuts and unusual economic frustrations facing states of the country, but assured that President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua was deeply concerned and committed to alleviating the pains of Nigerians from the crisis.

As a government, Governor

Chibuike Amaechi said, Rivers State has set aside N2 billion for the provision of micro finance facilities to indigenes as part of its direct response to the crisis while commencing an accelerated socio-economic development of the state through the construction of over 150 Health Centres, over 250 Primary Schools, a new University and so many roads.

Apart from creating jobs for indigenes and residents, Governor Amaechi explained, that the move is to provide necessary infrastructure, grow the economy through the participation of all stakeholders by way of industrialization and create needed skilled and unskilled employment for its population.

He painted a gory picture of economic challenges in the global market, noting that painful as it is, emerging markets, such as Nigeria are vulnerable to the crisis, hence the need to see the crisis as an avenue to prepare for the future.

"It is unfortunate that my state is unable to contribute as much oil as we used to because of the security situation, but I can assure you that we are up to the challenge", he said, while noting that oil, which is a blessing to Nigeria, has now become its Achilles heels.

While identifying weak currencies and massive withdrawals from emerging economies as some reasons for the greater impact on Nigeria, the governor said the rippling effects of the meltdown are many and called for concerted efforts from stakeholders in the country to help Nigeria swim out of the economic crisis.

Also speaking, a prominent Lawyer,

Chief Afe Babalola SAN noted that a nation will be nothing without a good press and commended the Lagos State Chapter of the NUJ for maintaining their vibrant image over the years.

He lauded Governor Amaechi for coming all the way to Lagos to deliver a lecture for the Lagos Chapter of the NUJ, adding "your presence here shows the importance you attach to the Press".

In his speech, the National President of the NUJ, Mr Ndagene Akwu reminded journalists of the need to critically examine credentials of aspiring public officers in the nation, noting that those who seek elected positions should be ready to make sacrifices if they must lead.

He described the Lagos State Chapter of the Union as one of the most vibrant in Nigeria.

Earlier, the Chairman of the Lagos State Chapter of the NUJ, Alhaji Wahaab Alabi Oba, threw more light on the essence of the lecture, saying "rather than sit on the fence in the face of threatening economic crisis, the Lagos Media has chosen to provide a platform to serve as a rallying-point for leaders and government to proffer solutions on ways out of the economic crisis.

He explained that there had been some skepticism among Nigerians on the global meltdown, which he said, had prompted the Lagos NUJ to set the agenda for solutions.

In his words: "unfolding developments have clearly revealed that Nigeria cannot be insulated from happenings at the global level.

## Nigeria Earns 3.4 Billion Euros From France

### ...as the French Commercial Counsellor visits Rivers

The French Commercial Counsellor to Nigeria, Mr Abboud Zaoui, says Nigeria is the first country in Sub-Saharan Africa to earn about 3.4 billion Euros through export to France Mr Zaoui said this when he led a French Trade Mission on a courtesy call on Governor Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi at Government House, Port Harcourt.

Accompanied on the visit by the President and members of the Port Harcourt Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture, Mr Zaoui said Nigeria and France have a long standing business relationship.

Mr Zaoui also explained that the collaboration between his country and the Port Harcourt Chamber of Commerce for the past two years has blossomed, as it led to organizing missions for companies in oil and gas sector to Paris and signing of partnership agreement.

He stated that the year 2008 became the highest in the exchange programme between Nigeria and France, as over 50 companies from here had visited France, noting that more French companies are interested in coming to Rivers State to invest and solicited for continued cooperation.

Responding, Governor Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi of Rivers State reiterated the resolve of the state government to ensure that communities in the state are secured for investments to come in.

The State Chief Executive, who told the French delegation that there are quite a lot of opportunities for investment in Rivers State, pointed out that several South African investors have already indicated interest in doing business in the state, while an Indian firm had bought over the Eleme Petrochemical Company.

He expressed happiness with the delegation for indicating the willingness of the French people to do business in Rivers State, and commended their choice of the Port Harcourt Chamber of Commerce as a veritable business link with Rivers businessmen.

Governor Amaechi assured the French delegation of government's assistance in any area of their need and welcomed them to Port Harcourt, which he described as the hot belt of the Niger Delta in terms of oil and gas production.

Meanwhile, President of the Port Harcourt Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture PHCCIMA, Prince Billy Harry, says economic activities in Rivers State are gradually picking up.

Speaking in an interview with newsmen in Government House Port Harcourt shortly after the visit of the French delegation, Prince Billy Harry said, more foreign entrepreneurs are coming into the state to invest, as well as make business enquiries, adding that the state government's efforts at improving the security situation in the state was yielding positive results.

Prince Billy Harry added that Rivers State, being the hub of oil and gas in Sub-Saharan Africa, has the capacity and ability to contain the growth of any kind of business, including real estate, food and manufacturing, and called on the state government to continue to work with the Chamber of Commerce and the organized private sector in order to promote and encourage more foreign investments in the state.