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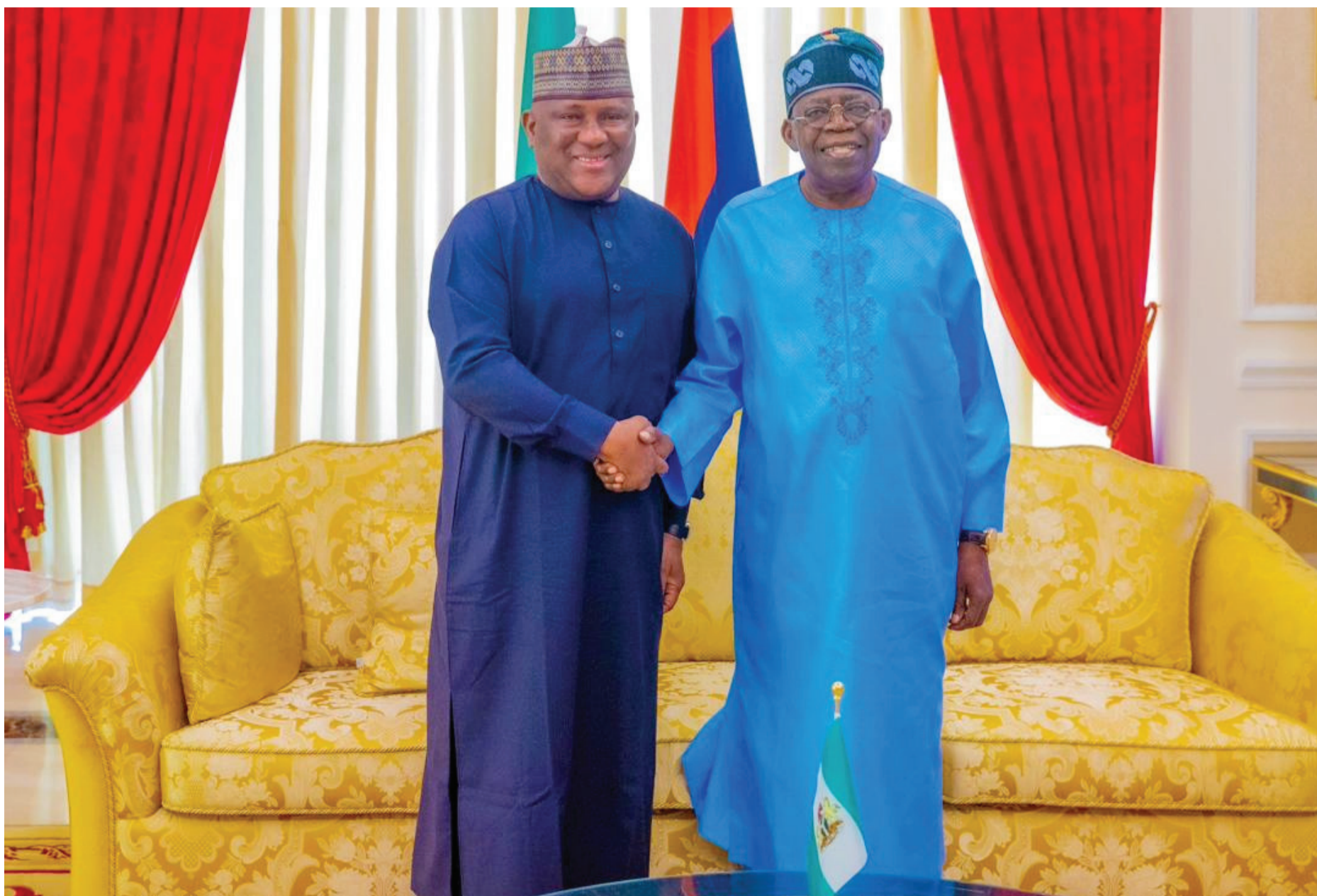


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2nd Edition

Two-Year Reset: BUA Group Chairman's Perspective On Nigeria's Economic Renewal



President Bola Ahmed Tinubu (r) in a handshake with Mr. Abdul Samad Rabi, Chairman of BUA Group

As Nigeria commemorates two transformative years under President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, the Founder and Chairman of BUA Group, **Mr. Abdul Samad Rabi**, here offers a rare, firsthand insight into how bold policy shifts—such as fuel subsidy

removal, FX unification, and a renewed commitment to fairness in governance—have reshaped the operating environment for Nigerian businesses. In the story that is not just of reform, **Enam Obiosio** highlights a compelling testament to what becomes

possible when leadership aligns with vision, and when courage meets conviction in the pursuit of national progress.

CONTINUES ON PG 2



...it pays to pay your TAX

In a candid and sweeping reflection, Mr. Rabiú steps away from politics and power games to offer a grounded, insider’s perspective on what Nigeria’s economy has gained, lost, and recalibrated under President Tinubu’s reform-heavy presidency.

“I speak not only as the Chairman of BUA Group,” Mr. Rabiú begins, “but as someone who has lived through the cost of dysfunction and the promise of reform. These two years have shown us that bold decisions — even when painful — can unlock real, structural transformation.”

From fuel subsidy removal to foreign exchange unification, and from restored investor confidence to sweeping infrastructure investment, Mr. Rabiú paints a portrait of a Nigeria turning the corner, even amid turbulence.

The End of the Subsidy Era: Nigeria Stops Bleeding

Perhaps no single decision has defined President Tinubu’s early presidency more than the abrupt removal of fuel subsidy — a move that many past leaders tiptoed around for decades.

“It was unsustainable,” Mr. Rabiú says firmly. “We were not just subsidizing Nigerians — we were subsidizing our entire sub-region.” He recalls a diplomatic dinner in Niger Republic where President Mohamed Bazoum jokingly thanked Nigeria for the free fuel. “100 percent of premium motor spirit (PMS) in Niger came from Nigeria. That is how bad it was.”

Since the subsidy removal, Nigeria’s daily fuel consumption has dropped dramatically — not because Nigerians use less, Mr. Rabiú explains, but because illicit cross-border arbitrage has all but collapsed. That alone, he notes, is proof the system was hemorrhaging.

Now, the funds once drained by subsidies are flowing into infrastructure projects — roads, power, and regional developments. “Every state is getting more revenue now. That is real impact,” he emphasises.

The FX Unification: From Gatekeeping to Growth

For years, Nigeria’s dual exchange rate system bred inefficiency, corruption, and stagnation. Mr. Rabiú speaks vividly about how business leaders had to “camp” in Abuja for days just to beg the Central Bank for foreign exchange allocations.

“It was humiliating. It was inefficient. I spent half my time chasing FX. Now? I have not been to the CBN in two years,” he notes with quiet satisfaction. “That is a functional market.”

Under President Tinubu’s administration, the FX window has been unified — a move Mr. Rabiú commends as pivotal. “Today, if you need \$200 million for trade, you do not need to lobby anyone. That is what a real economy should look like.”

From Hostile to Hospitable: The Return of Business Stability

In a stunning anecdote, Mr. Rabiú recalls how a \$500 million BUA Foods facility in Port Harcourt was abruptly shut down under a past Nigerian Port Authority (NPA) leadership — not for any breach, but allegedly due to personal rivalries and vested interests.

“It was closed overnight because we were competing with someone’s friend. That cannot happen under President Tinubu,” he asserts. “The fear of arbitrary shutdowns is gone. That is a huge win for industry.”

Stability, he argues, is a currency of its own. With



Mr. Abdul Samad Rabiú, Chairman of BUA Group

predictability comes investment. “Now, you do not need access to the President to be treated fairly. That is the biggest shift we have seen.”

Infrastructure Boom: The Roads to a New Economy

From the Lagos-Calabar Coastal Highway to the Sokoto-Badagry corridor, Mr. Rabiú notes that infrastructure investment is finally keeping pace with national ambition.

“Our roads were killing business. Transport costs from Lagos to the North were crippling,” he says. “Now, with these projects — funded by savings from subsidy and better revenue sharing — logistics are improving.”

Through public-private partnerships like the Tax Credit Scheme, BUA itself is backing road projects in Kwara and Kogi. “This government is building for the long-term, and it shows.”

A Billion-Dollar Bet on Nigeria

Since 2023, BUA Group has pumped over \$1 bil-

lion in new investments into Nigeria. “We are doubling flour and pasta capacity, expanding cement, launching the first POP plaster plant, and breaking ground on a solar plant in Sokoto,” Mr. Rabiú says. “The confidence is back.”

The LNG project in Ajaokuta, he states, will diversify Nigeria’s energy portfolio further. With a stable naira and easier access to FX, “We can now plan, and planning is everything in business.”

Food Security and Smart Policy

Food inflation remains a critical concern for Nigerians. But Mr. Rabiú credits President Tinubu’s six-month tariff waiver on rice imports as a “game-changing intervention” that temporarily broke the grip of hoarders.

“Middlemen were creating artificial scarcity. The waiver disrupted that cycle,” he explains. “It worked. It showed foresight. It showed the government was listening.”

A Philosophy of Self-Reliance: Backward Integration as Policy

At the heart of BUA’s industrial ethos — and now aligned with President Tinubu’s “Nigeria First” policy — is backward integration. Mr. Rabiú proudly highlights how BUA Cement is nearly 100% local, from mining to energy.

“If we were importing cement today, it would cost over N15, 000 per bag,” he states. “Our local capacity is saving the economy.” Mr. Rabiú also credits the government for applying incentives equitably across the industry. “There is no favouritism. There is clarity. That is how you scale an economy.”

“**This government is building for the long-term, and it shows**”



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EDITORIAL**Nigeria Can Secure Steady Growth—But Only Through Deep, Sustained Reform**

The World Bank's latest Global Economic Prospects report brings a measured dose of optimism for Nigeria's economic future. The report forecasts a sustained upward trajectory for the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) over the next three years—3.6% in 2025, 3.7% in 2026, and 3.8% in 2027. These projections signal a welcome change from years of sluggish and inconsistent growth. But behind the headline numbers lies a clear message: Nigeria's promise of steady economic expansion will only materialize if bold and deliberate reforms are seen through to completion.

The growth outlook is underpinned by anticipated improvements in oil output, renewed investor confidence, and, critically, the economic reforms currently being pursued by the President Tinubu's administration. The reforms in energy pricing, exchange rate management, and revenue mobilisation are commendable first steps toward correcting long-standing macroeconomic imbalances. However, this momentum must not be lost. The country remains exposed to significant risks—including inflationary pressures, exchange rate instability, and persistently high fiscal deficits—that could undermine these gains if not tackled decisively.

For years, Nigeria has been trapped in a cycle of fragile growth, driven largely by oil exports, while non-oil sectors struggled under the weight of weak infrastructure, policy inconsistencies, and underdeveloped institutions. The World Bank rightly calls for the prioritization of structural reforms that go beyond surface-level adjustments. These include promoting private sector development, investing in critical infrastructure, and significantly improving human capital.

To achieve the kind of long-term economic resilience that citizens desire, the government must deepen its reform agenda in several key areas. Exchange rate policy must be transparent, consistent, and market-driven. Dual or multiple FX windows only breed uncertainty, hinder investment, and distort market behavior. The unification of the exchange rate—though painful in the short term—must be followed through with the kind of policy clarity that builds investor confidence and encourages capital inflows.

Fiscal discipline must be strengthened through better revenue collection and reduced reliance on debt. Nigeria's tax-to-GDP ratio remains one of the lowest in the world. Expanding the tax base, eliminating wasteful subsidies, and plugging leakages in government spending are es-

sential to restoring fiscal balance and creating room for public investment in sectors that drive inclusive growth.

Structural transformation must be front and center. For Nigeria's economic expansion to be meaningful, it must be broad-based—driven not only by extractives but by robust manufacturing, agriculture, digital innovation, and the creative economy. The social dimension of reform must not be neglected. As petrol subsidies are removed and market adjustments take effect, millions of poor and vulnerable Nigerians risk being left behind. It is imperative that the government pairs economic reforms with strong social protection mechanisms, particularly through direct cash transfers, targeted subsidies, and job creation programs. Growth must not only be sustained—it must be inclusive.

Human capital development must be treated as a national emergency. Nigeria cannot compete in the global economy with an undereducated and unhealthy population. More investment is needed in basic education, vocational training, healthcare, and skills development to prepare the country's vast youth population for a modern, knowledge-based economy.

DID YOU KNOW?

That President Tinubu's reforms are part of the Renewed Hope Agenda, designed to reposition Nigeria across critical sectors including education, energy, infrastructure, and innovation.

Stay tuned for more updates on reform milestones, policy impact, and opportunities for Nigerian citizens. Have feedback or questions? Send us an email at: editor@thereforms.ng

Time to Tell Nigeria's Story — The Position of The Reforms Newspaper

For far too long, the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) has been misunderstood, misrepresented, and misquoted — not for a lack of achievements, but for a tragic deficit in communication. Today, *The Reforms*, a National Newspaper, rises not as a mouthpiece, but as a credible national platform to correct the narrative and restore public confidence in Nigeria's reform-driven trajectory.

Let us be blunt: in the past, government communication structures had been lethargic, inconsistent, and often reactive. Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs), despite overseeing groundbreaking reforms across agriculture, power, finance, education, digital innovation, energy, and infrastructure, had largely failed to communicate their successes with clarity and consistency. In their silence, distortions flourished. In their delays, misinformation had taken root.

This was not just a national communication failure — it was a vacuum of narrative power.

It is precisely in this void that *The Reforms* has emerged as a strategic imperative. Our mandate is not to whitewash governments' actions or spread propaganda. We are beholden to spin doctors or political handlers. We are beholden only to the truth — the verifiable, policy-driven, people-impacting truth of Nigeria's reform journey.

The FGN has rightly endorsed *The Reforms* as the non-partisan channel through which MDAs and private sector partners can boldly articulate the ongoing transformation of the Nigerian economy and society. From economic diversification and tax reforms to housing delivery, digital governance, energy transition, and ease of doing business, among others, — we are committed to amplifying facts, not fiction.

Nigeria is not standing still. The country is moving — and moving fast. But without strategic story-

telling rooted in fact and transparency, that movement may be missed or, worse, maligned.

To the MDAs: You are implementing reforms. But reforms do not speak for themselves. You must. And *The Reforms* is here to help you do just that — professionally, objectively, and impactfully.

To the private sector: You are stakeholders in the reform process. Let your voice be heard. Let your innovations and contributions to national development be documented in a newspaper founded on the principle of national interest above noise.

It is time we tell our own story — the Nigerian story — not through borrowed voices or external media filters, but through a deliberate, intelligent platform that understands the nation and its nuances.

This is not a plea. This is a national call to action.

Partner with *The Reforms*. Let the story of Nigeria's rebirth be told by those who live it, lead it, and believe in it.

Nigeria Launches AI Scaling Hub with Gates Foundation

● To Boost Health, Education, Agriculture

By Kingsley Benson

In a landmark move to harness emerging technologies for national development, the Federal Government of Nigeria has launched the Nigeria Artificial Intelligence (AI) Scaling Hub—a bold new initiative aimed at accelerating the deployment of responsible AI solutions across critical sectors such as health, education, and agriculture.

Unveiled at a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signing ceremony in Abuja, the Scaling Hub is the result of a strategic collaboration between the Federal Ministry of Communications, Innovation & Digital Economy and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, with the Foundation pledging up to \$7.5 million in support over the next three years.

At the heart of this initiative is a commitment to unlock AI's potential to solve real-world challenges by scaling proven, locally developed technologies that can have widespread societal impact.

“By working with the Gates Foundation, we are strengthening our capacity to ensure that AI-driven solutions are developed responsibly and deployed equitably,” said Dr. Bosun Tijani, Honourable Minister of Communications, Innovation & Digital Economy. “The AI Scaling Hub will serve as a catalyst for Nigerian innovators — providing the resources, mentorship, and support necessary to translate ideas into impact.”

A Collaborative Model for Innovation at Scale

The Nigeria AI Scaling Hub is designed as a multi-stakeholder platform, bringing together government agencies, private sector technology firms, academic institutions, and development partners. Its core mission is to identify, scale, and embed mature AI innovations into the fabric of Nigeria's development systems — from healthcare delivery and educational access to improved agricultural practices.

By building an ecosystem of support, the initiative seeks to amplify the impact of existing innovations, while setting a new standard for responsible technology adoption on the continent.

“AI is transforming how we address development challenges — unlocking new ways to improve lives and strengthen systems,” said Mr. Uche Amaonwu, Nigeria Country Director at the Gates Foundation. “We're proud to support the Nigeria AI Scaling Hub with the Government of Nigeria and Lagos Business School, investing in local talent and innovation to ensure the benefits of AI reach those who need them most.”

Building on National Strategy and Vision

The launch of the Scaling Hub aligns with the Nigerian government's broader digital agenda, including the recent development of a National Artificial Intelligence Strategy. This strategy provides a

“**AI is transforming how we address development challenges — unlocking new ways to improve lives and strengthen systems**”



Mr. Bill Gates, Co-founder/CEO Microsoft Corporation

framework for the ethical and impactful use of AI technologies in Nigeria and underscores the government's ambition to position the country as a leader in emerging technologies across Africa.

Dr. Tijani noted that Nigeria is already making strides in AI adoption and capacity-building, and the Scaling Hub will further enhance the country's ability to deploy AI solutions that are not only innovative but inclusive and tailored to local needs.

Unlocking Impact Where It is Needed Most

The sectors targeted by the Scaling Hub—health, education, and agriculture—are among the most consequential for Nigeria's future. With over 200 million citizens, a young population, and pressing development needs, the opportunity to use AI to improve health outcomes, boost literacy and learning, and enhance food security is immense.

By connecting innovators with the tools, funding, and institutional support necessary to take their ideas to scale, the AI Scaling Hub is poised to serve as a powerful model for other African nations.

As global conversations continue around the governance and potential risks of AI, Nigeria's AI Scaling Hub represents a proactive step toward shaping a future where technology works for the many, not just the few.

In launching this initiative, Nigeria has not only embraced the future—it has begun actively shaping it.



R-L: Dr. Bosun Tijani, Honourable Minister of Communications, Innovation & Digital Economy; Mr. Bill Gates; and Mr. Aigboge Aig-Imoukhuede, Chairman of Access Holdings Plc

DMO Deploying Sukuk To Transform Road Infrastructure



Ms. Patience Oniha, Managing Director Of DMO

By Jennete Ugo Anya

In a rapidly changing economic landscape, where infrastructure development is seen as the backbone of national growth, Nigeria is gradually finding innovative ways to fund critical projects without overburdening its finances. At the heart of this evolving fiscal architecture is the Debt Management Office (DMO), led with quiet confidence and competence by Ms. Patience Oniha. Under her stewardship, the agency has repositioned the use of Sukuk—as a powerful tool to address the nation’s pressing infrastructure deficits, particularly in the road transport sector.

As part of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu’s broader reform agenda, which aims to recalibrate the economy through prudent fiscal management and strategic investment in public goods, the deployment of Sukuk by the DMO stands out as a model of innovation, transparency, and impact.

What is Sukuk, and Why Does it Matter?

Sukuk, in Nigeria’s context, provides a stable, long-term, and ethical financing option, one that aligns perfectly with the need to build sustainable public infrastructure without deepening conventional debt exposure.

Since its debut in 2017, Nigeria’s Sukuk issuance

has mobilized over N865 billion, all of which has been channeled into road construction and rehabilitation projects across the six geopolitical zones. This model ensures that the borrowed funds are directly tied to tangible development outcomes—something that many traditional borrowing frameworks often struggle to guarantee.

A Roadmap to Better Roads

DMO has embraced Sukuk not just as a fiscal instrument, but as a developmental catalyst. Working closely with the Federal Ministry of Works and the Federal Ministry of Finance, the agency has

“

Sukuk is a demonstration that debt can be used effectively when it is tied to visible, impactful projects ...

ensured that each Sukuk tranche is tied to specific projects, clearly monitored and executed under a system of checks and balances.

The results have been nothing short of impressive. Major federal highways that had languished for years due to underfunding have received new life. These include and not limited to:

Abuja–Abaji–Lokoja Road: This critical highway connects Abuja to the southern regions of Nigeria. Sukuk funding has been instrumental in the dualisation and rehabilitation of this route, improving safety and reducing congestion.

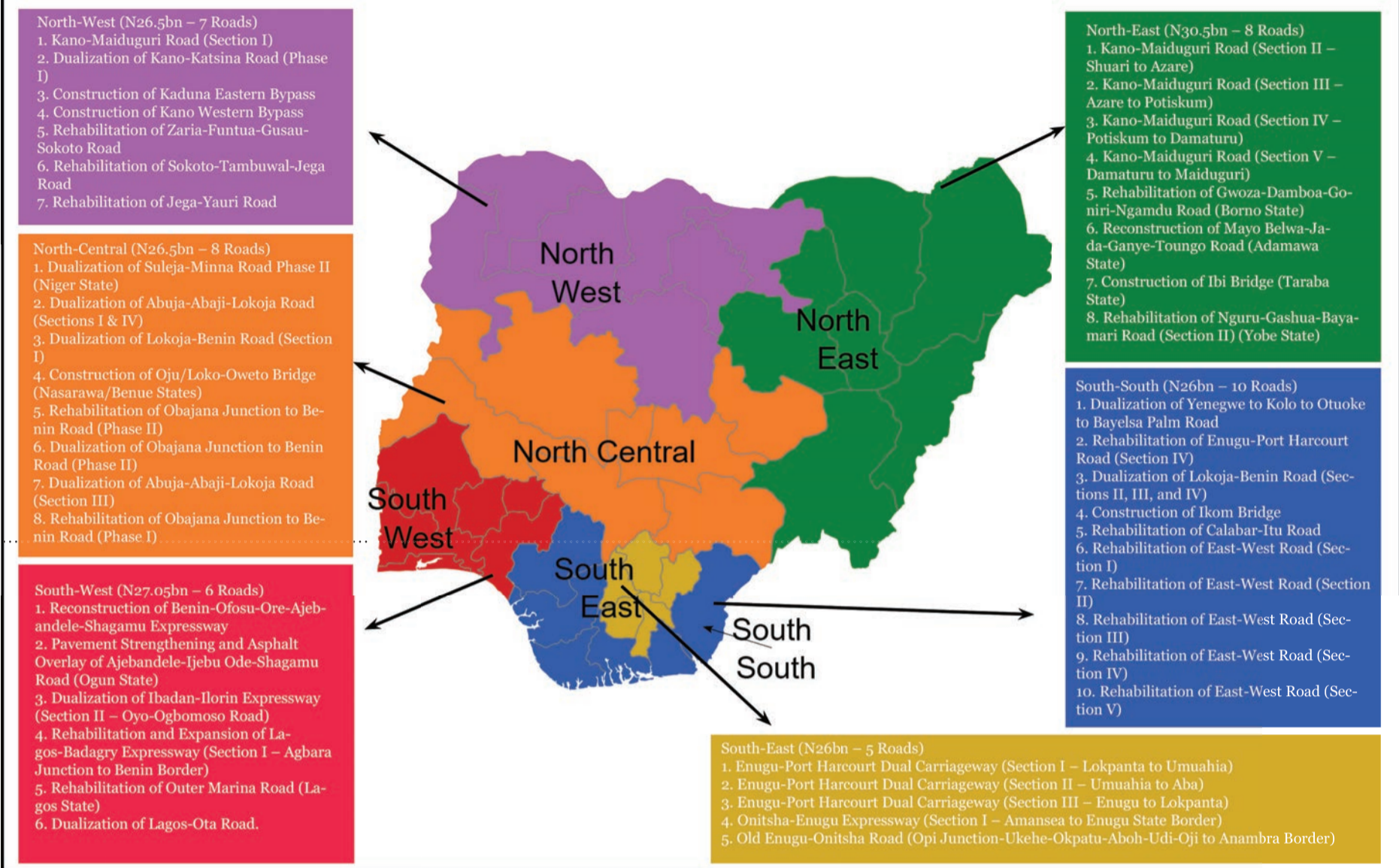
Suleja–Minna Road: Although primarily linking Niger State, this road serves as a vital corridor for commuters and goods entering Abuja. Sukuk funds have facilitated its reconstruction, enhancing regional integration.

Apo Roundabout to Mechanic Village Road: Within the FCT, this stretch has benefited from Sukuk financing, addressing urban traffic challenges and supporting local economic activities.

These projects exemplify the effective use of Sukuk as a financing tool for infrastructure development in Abuja, contributing to the broader objectives of national growth and economic diversification.

These projects are not just improving transportation and logistics; they are also creating thousands

Sukuk Funded Road Across Nigeria's Geopolitical Zones



Sources: DMO, The Sun Newspaper

of direct and indirect jobs, enhancing regional integration, reducing road accidents, and boosting trade across states.

Driving Reforms Through Responsible Borrowing

Ms. Oniha, who has got some awards as seasoned technocrat with extensive experience in capital markets and public finance, has continuously emphasised the importance of borrowing for growth, not for consumption. The DMO has promoted greater transparency in public debt management, educating Nigerians on the difference between productive and unproductive borrowing.

Sukuk is a demonstration that debt can be used effectively when it is tied to visible, impactful projects, according to DMO whose job it is to ensure that every naira borrowed delivers value to the Nigerian people.

This philosophy mirrors the broader fiscal reforms of the President Tinubu administration, which is focused on domestic resource mobilization, reducing the cost of governance, and ensuring that every investment contributes to long-term economic resilience.

Transparency and Public Trust

One of the key reasons Sukuk has gained public acceptance in Nigeria is its transparency. Each issuance is tied to clearly defined projects, and progress reports are publicly accessible. The involvement of reputable third-party trustees and project monitoring teams has helped restore public confidence in government borrowing and spending—an essential foundation for any successful reform agenda.

The Sukuk Advantage

As Nigeria continues to grapple with the challenges

PURPOSE OF SUKUK

DMO embraces Sukuk not just as a fiscal instrument, but as a developmental catalyst.

Objective: To diversify funding sources and accelerate infrastructural development across the country.

FEATURES OF SUKUK

- Type: Sovereign Sukuk, a non-interest, asset-backed financial instrument.
- Bonds backed by tangible assets.
- Fixed return to investors.
- Tradable on the secondary market.

POWERING INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

- The transformation of Nigeria's road infrastructure through Sukuk financing is a case study in how vision, leadership, and innovation can converge to deliver real development

REGULATORY AND MARKET RECOGNITION

- Sukuk bonds backed by full faith and credit of the FGN.
- Qualifies under:
 - Trustee Investment Act.
 - CIT Act and PIT Act – providing tax exemptions for pension funds and other qualified investors.
 - Recognized as a liquid asset by the CBN.
- Certified by the FRACE of the CBN.
- Sukuk Bonds listed on:
 - Nigerian Exchange (NGX)
 - FMDQ Securities Exchange Limited

HISTORICAL PERFORMANCE

- Sukuk launched in Nigeria in 2017 as a strategic funding and inclusion tool.
- Prior issuances have been oversubscribed:
 - 2020: N150 billion, 11.20% annual rental, due 2027 – oversubscribed.
 - 2018: N100 billion, 15.743% rental – oversubscribed.
 - 2017 (maiden issue): N100 billion, 16.47% rental – oversubscribed by 5.8%.
- Third issuance (N150bn) saw subscriptions hit N519.12 billion, showing strong investor demand.

of inflation, revenue shortfalls, and exchange rate instability, instruments like Sukuk provide a more stable and ethical funding option. With global interest in Islamic finance on the rise, Nigeria's leadership in this area is positioning it as a hub for non-interest finance in West Africa.

Moreover, the DMO's success with Sukuk is inspiring other government agencies to consider innovative funding mechanisms, while also offering state governments a blueprint for responsible, project-tied borrowing.

The transformation of Nigeria's road infrastructure through Sukuk financing is a case study in how vision, leadership, and innovation can converge to deliver real development. Through the strategic direction of the DMO, the Federal Government's reform agenda is not just a promise—it is becoming a visible, drivable reality.

In a nation where infrastructure was once synonymous with abandoned projects and inflated contracts, the Sukuk story is proof that with the right tools and transparent execution, Nigeria can indeed build the future it dreams of—one road at a time.



BOI Drives Nigeria's Industrial Revolution, Economic Transformation



Dr. Olasupo Olusi, MD/CEO of BOI

By Musa Ibrahim

As Nigeria charts a bold course toward industrialization, economic diversification, and mass poverty alleviation, one institution stands at the center of the transition: the Bank of Industry (BOI). The nation's oldest and most influential development finance institution is being repositioned as a key driver in President Tinubu administration's push for inclusive, private sector-led growth.

The Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer (MD/CEO) of the bank, Dr. Olasupo Olusi, who is also a seasoned economist and development

finance expert, has launched a sweeping strategic pivot in alignment with the Renewed Hope Agenda, signaling a new direction for industrial finance in Nigeria.

The bank's renewed focus is reflected in several priority areas: The BOI has revamped its internal risk assessment frameworks to curb non-performing loans, enhance loan recovery, and strengthen compliance and accountability; beyond funding machines and infrastructure, the bank now prioritizes financing ideas and people—particularly youth, women, and micro-entrepreneurs—embedding financial inclusion into its industrialization mandate; the bank has attracted over \$1 billion in concession-

al funding from partners including the AfDB, AFD, and KfW—unlocking affordable, long-term capital

“BOI's support for micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) has intensified under the current administration



Dr. Olasupo Olusi, MD\CEO of BOI

for industrial growth. In line with President Tinubu’s digital governance reforms, the BOI has launched a Digital Lending and Analytics Hub, enabling data-driven, transparent loan approvals and streamlined customer service.

From Intervention to Transformation

President Tinubu’s reform blueprint rests on four foundational pillars: economic stability, fiscal and monetary discipline, infrastructure renewal, and job creation through industrial growth. The BOI’s evolving role mirrors these national priorities. The key reforms include:

- Scaling Up Development Finance Capacity to meet Nigeria’s industrial demands.
- Fostering Industrial Ecosystems instead of just disbursing loans.
- Deepening MSME Access to Capital in collaboration with state governments and international partners.
- Targeted Inclusion of women and youth, often the most underserved entrepreneurial demographics.

The bank is no longer just a financier—it is now a builder of industries, central to the president’s ambition to transform Nigeria into a \$1 trillion economy by 2030.

MSMEs: Powering Grassroots Prosperity

BOI’s support for micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) has intensified under the current administration. Industrial development is now approached as a grassroots imperative, not a privilege for a few.

Working alongside the Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment, BOI has disbursed over N100 billion in SME loans since 2023—many with interest rates as low as five percent, extended tenors, and simplified application processes.

- These efforts have:
- Enabled over 2 million MSMEs to access formal credit.
 - Created or preserved more than 1.5 million jobs.

- Boosted productivity in sectors like agribusiness, fashion, furniture, and ICT.

Through flagship initiatives like the BOI-FG MSME Fund, Fashion and Beauty Accelerator, and the Graduate Entrepreneurship Fund, the bank provides not only financing but also training, digital tools, and mentorship to ensure sustainability.

Driving Industrialization, Value Chain Development

A key component of President Tinubu’s industrialization strategy is backward integration—maximizing value from local production. In response, the BOI launched the Strategic Industrial Intervention Framework (SIIF) in 2024 to channel funds toward:

- Agro-processing and food storage to reduce post-harvest losses.
- Reviving textile and garment clusters in Northern Nigeria.
- Supporting leather and footwear clusters in Aba and Kano.
- Refurbishing industrial parks and shared facilities across the six geopolitical zones.

Development Finance with Impact

BOI’s transformation under this administration transcends conventional lending. It now functions as a development finance institution (DFI) with defined social and environmental impact goals, including sustainability, gender equity, and inclusion.

Expanding Local, Global Partnerships

In response to renewed calls for foreign direct investment and private sector engagement, the BOI has broadened its strategic alliances. Between 2023 and 2025:

- Over \$1 billion was secured from global DFIs, including AfDB, Afreximbank, KfW, and AFD.
- Co-financing agreements were signed with state governments in Ogun, Lagos, Edo, and Kaduna state—supporting agro-industrial clusters and light manufacturing.
- A Creative Industry Fund was launched in partnership with private equity firms to finance Ni-

geria’s booming film, music, and gaming sectors.

Digitization, Transparency at the Core

Aligned with President Tinubu’s public sector reform push, the BOI has undergone a digital overhaul. A new online portal now allows real-time loan tracking, application submission, and AI-based risk analysis—cutting red tape, improving access, and eliminating inefficiencies.

Bringing Development Finance Closer People

The BOI’s grassroots expansion continues. Speaking at the commissioning of the bank’s new office in Kogi State, Dr. Olusi emphasized that the event was more than a ribbon-cutting—it marked the bank’s firm commitment to bringing industrial finance to underserved communities.

“Our presence here will empower MSMEs, cooperatives, and youth- and women-led ventures in Kogi to grow, create jobs, and drive inclusive development,” he said.

The new office aligns with the bank’s strategy of:

- Expanding outreach to MSMEs across all 36 states.
- Promoting local manufacturing and entrepreneurship.
- Delivering sector-specific support to industries like agriculture, solid minerals, and the circular economy.

Through instruments like the N200 billion MSME Intervention Fund, the BOI continues to fund businesses that are driving Nigeria’s growth, jobs, and innovation.



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Rewriting Nigeria's Fiscal Future With Tax Reforms Signaling Equity, Growth



Dr. Zacch Adedeji, Executive Chairman of FIRS

By Ahmed Ahmed

As Nigeria undergoes critical economic reform, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's administration is advancing one of its boldest initiatives yet: a comprehensive overhaul of the nation's tax system.

Spearheaded by the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) under Dr. Zacch Adedeji and the Presidential Fiscal Policy and Tax Reforms Committee (PFPTC) chaired by Mr. Taiwo Oyedele, this reform agenda aims to create a fairer, more efficient, and development-oriented fiscal framework.

At the heart of the effort are four newly passed bills:

- Nigeria Tax Bill 2024
- Nigeria Tax Administration Bill 2025
- Nigeria Revenue Service (Establishment) Bill 2025
- Joint Revenue Board (Establishment) Bill 2025

These bills seek to unify tax collection under a centralized Nigeria Revenue Service (NRS), ending the

fragmentation. The goal: improved transparency, compliance, and efficiency.

The reform also targets Nigeria's long-standing challenge with multiple, duplicative, and predatory taxes. The Tax Administration Bill eliminates nuisance levies and proposes a Joint Revenue Board to harmonize tax rates nationwide and create a unified taxpayer database—a huge relief for MSMEs.

"We are creating one taxpayer, one database, one interface," Mr. Oyedele said, stating that the system had become "a jungle." He also said: "Our goal is simple — build a tax system that works for all Nigerians. We want the poor protected, the middle class empowered, and the wealthy accountable."

Key elements of the reform include:

Tax Rates & Major Fiscal Changes

VAT: Remains at 7.5%

- Contrary to the presidency's proposal to increase VAT to 12.5%, the National Assembly retained the rate at 7.5%.

Corporate Income Tax (CIT): Held at 30%

- The CIT rate stays unchanged at 30% for

now.

Personal Income Tax Relief

- Employees earning minimum wage (~N800,000/year) and below are exempt from personal income tax.

Minimum Tax & Global Minimum Tax

- Companies with no profit are exempt from the 0.5% turnover minimum tax.
- However, multinationals below a 15% effective

“**The passage of these tax bills marks a turning point in our fiscal history**”



Mr. Taiwo Oyedele, Chairman of Presidential Fiscal Policy and Tax Reforms Committee

tive tax rate may face a top-up or global minimum tax.

Development Levy (4%)

- Introduces 4% levy with a new beneficiary-sharing formula:
 - TETFUND 50%, NELFUND 15%, NITDA 10%, Science & Engineering 10%, Cybersecurity 5%, Defence 10%.

VAT Revenue Sharing Reform

- The revised formula directs states 55%, LGs 35%, and federal govt. 10%.
- Derivation principle redefined as the place of consumption.

Regulatory & Administrative Changes

- Nigeria Revenue Service (NRS) replaces FIRS; introduces a new board structure, including a Senate-confirmed Executive Vice Chairman.
- Tax Appeal Tribunal expanded in scope; Office of Tax Ombud established for taxpayer disputes.
- Stricter penalties for non-compliance (e.g., failure to register, file returns, maintain books).

Sector-Specific Adjustments & Clarifications

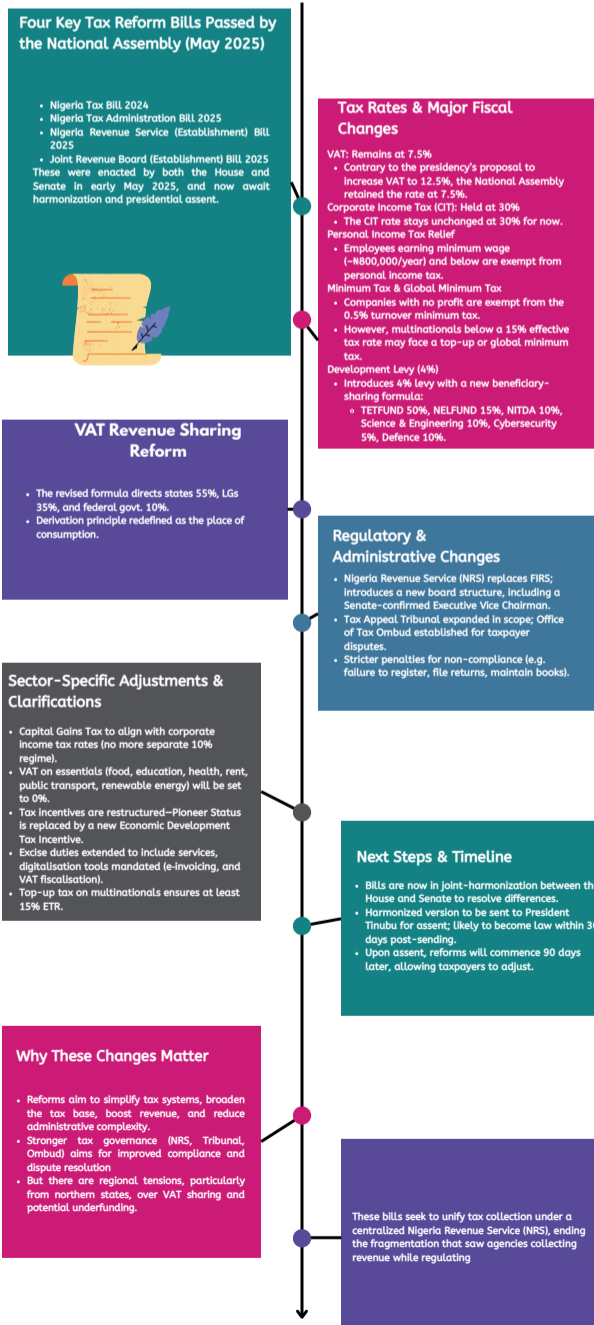
- Capital Gains Tax to align with corporate income tax rates (no more separate 10% regime).
- VAT on essentials (food, education, health, rent, public transport, renewable energy) will be set to 0%.
- Tax incentives are restructured—Pioneer Status is replaced by a new Economic Development Tax Incentive.
- Excise duties extended to include services, digitalisation tools mandated (e-invoicing, and VAT fiscalisation).
- Top-up tax on multinationals ensures at least 15% ETR.

On the administrative side, FIRS has also launched a revised Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to standardize processes like registration, payments, and audits across its 300+ offices nationwide. The goal is “consistency, transparency, and service.”

“This SOP is a declaration of who we are becoming,” stated Dr. Adedeji, highlighting the FIRS’ transformation into a modern, service-driven institution.

The reforms place strong emphasis on digitalization, aiming to automate tax assessments and bring digital platforms, social media influencers, and

CURRENT NIGERIAN TAX REFORMS (MAY) 2025



streaming services into the tax net. This automation reduces human interference — a major source of corruption.

While some concerns remain — especially from state governments fearing loss of revenue control — the reform’s long-term outlook is aimed at building public trust and encouraging voluntary compliance.

“This is about equity,” said Dr. Adedeji. “We are shifting to a system where taxes reflect ability to pay and contribute to lifting people out of poverty.” He, also speaking on the bills said: “The passage of these tax bills marks a turning point in our fiscal history. Centralizing revenue collection under the NRS will drive accountability, efficiency, and investor confidence.”

“**Our goal is simple — build a tax system that works for all Nigerians...**”





NIGERIA FIRST

“

It is time we tell our own story — the Nigerian story — not through borrowed voices or external media filters, but through a deliberate, intelligent platform that understands the nation and its nuances.

”

NEXIM Bank Repositioning Nigeria for Export-Led Growth



Mr. Abba Bello, MD/CEO of NEXIM Bank

By Jennete Ugo Anya

As soon as President Bola Ahmed Tinubu got in the saddle, his administration rolled out a sweeping set of structural reforms aimed at stabilizing the economy, unlocking productivity, and charting a course toward sustainable, inclusive growth. At the heart of the vision lies a strategic hinge from a dependence on oil rents to a diversified, export-driven economy. In this context, the Nigerian Export-Import (NEXIM) Bank is emerging as a critical catalyst, recalibrating its mandate to support President Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda.

Under the leadership of Mr. Abba Bello, the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer (MD/CEO) who has continued to steer the institution since 2017, NEXIM Bank has deepened its interventionist posture while realigning with President Tinubu's pro-market, trade-expansionist outlook. The bank's evolving operations mirror the administration's priorities: boosting non-oil exports, improving access to trade finance, strengthening regional value chains, and promoting Made-in-Nigeria goods on the global stage.

Reforming Trade Finance for National Competitiveness

In line with the Tinubu administration's push for economic diversification, NEXIM Bank has aggressively pursued trade finance reforms. The administration's broader objective is to improve Nigeria's

current account balance and reduce vulnerability to oil price shocks. For a country where non-oil exports still contribute less than 10% of total export earnings, NEXIM's renewed mandate is essential.

To this end, the Bank has scaled up its Export Development Fund (EDF) and expanded concessional loan offerings to agro-processing firms, light manufacturers, solid mineral exporters, and creative economy entrepreneurs. Between 2023 and the first quarter of 2025, NEXIM reportedly disbursed over N240 billion in facilities targeted at non-oil exporters—an increase of more than 70% from the previous

two-year period.

In addition, the Bank has launched structured export finance schemes, including:

- The Women and Youth Export Facility (WAYEF), which supports women-led MSMEs in the shea butter, fashion, and crafts value chains.
- The Small and Medium Export Enterprise Facility (SMEEF), designed to help emerging exporters access working capital, machinery, and logistics support.

These facilities align with President Tinubu's broader vision of inclusive economic participation

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... NEXIM Bank has deepened its interventionist posture while realigning with President Tinubu's pro-market, trade-expansionist outlook

and youth empowerment through trade.

African Trade Integration and AfCFTA Alignment

President Tinubu has consistently emphasized the need for Nigeria to assert itself as a dominant player in intra-African trade, especially under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement. NEXIM has taken the lead in operationalizing this directive through various cross-border initiatives.

The Bank is a key promoter of the Sealink Project, a private-sector driven maritime initiative that seeks to improve direct shipping connectivity between Nigeria and West/Central African countries. The project, expected to become operational by the end of 2025, will drastically cut logistics costs, reduce export timelines, and improve regional trade flows.

In addition, NEXIM is actively supporting the development of Export Processing Zones (EPZs) in partnership with the Nigeria Export Processing Zones Authority (NEPZA), enabling Nigerian producers to manufacture, process, and ship products seamlessly to African markets.

This regional strategy resonates with President Tinubu's foreign policy ethos—economic diplomacy backed by trade infrastructure.

Export Credit Insurance and Risk Guarantee Expansion

As part of the administration's efforts to de-risk the business environment, NEXIM has intensified efforts to provide export credit guarantees and insurance products for Nigerian exporters. Working in partnership with the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and the Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC), the Bank has:

- Expanded its Credit Risk Guarantee (CRG) schemes to mitigate default risks by up to 80%.
- Deployed credit insurance policies to attract commercial lenders into the export value chain.
- Launched a Trade Information Portal, giving Nigerian exporters data-driven insights into destination markets, compliance requirements, and buyer risk assessments.

These measures support President Tinubu's investment narrative: a government that reduces risk and encourages innovation and enterprise.

Boosting Export Infrastructure through PPPs

One of the persistent bottlenecks for Nigerian exporters has been poor trade infrastructure—port congestion, inadequate storage facilities, and high transaction costs. NEXIM, under Tinubu's PPP-anchored infrastructure plan, is increasingly investing in hard and soft infrastructure to support trade facilitation.

Key initiatives include:

- Development of Export Trade Houses (ETHs) in select African and European markets to showcase Nigerian goods and aggregate demand.
- Financing of inland dry ports and commodi-

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It has become a strategic national vehicle for implementing export-led growth, poverty reduction, and inclusive economic empowerment



Mr. Abba Bello, MD/ CEO of NEXIM Bank

ty aggregation centers in the North and Middle Belt, easing the burden of transporting goods to the coast.

- Partnering with state governments to develop Special Agro-Industrial Processing Zones (SAPZs), aimed at turning raw agricultural produce into export-grade products.

These projects tie directly into President Tinubu's goal of generating \$100 billion in non-oil export revenues by 2030.

SMEs and the New Exporters' Onboarding Programme

Recognizing that small businesses face the steepest challenges in entering global markets, NEXIM has launched the New Exporters' Onboarding Programme (NEOP), targeting 10,000 SMEs by the end of 2025. The initiative includes:

- Capacity-building workshops on documentation, quality standards, and packaging.
- Access to pre-shipment finance and subsidized FX.
- Export mentoring in collaboration with chambers of commerce and export veterans.

Governance Reforms and Institutional Accountability

One of the pillars of President Tinubu administration is transparency and institutional accountability. In this light, NEXIM has adopted a corporate governance overhaul in line with international development finance best practices. New internal reforms include:

- Quarterly transparency reports detailing disbursements, repayment rates, and impact assess-

ments.

- Implementation of an Environmental and Social Risk Management Framework (ESRMF) for all projects.
- Integration of the GIFMIS/TSA system for improved public fund oversight and CBN compliance.

NEXIM's Role in Nigeria's Economic Renaissance

President Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda is built on a clear premise: Nigeria must export its way to prosperity. In this context, NEXIM Bank is no longer a silent institution operating in the background of trade facilitation. It has become a strategic national vehicle for implementing export-led growth, poverty reduction, and inclusive economic empowerment.



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From Promise to Performance: Why Nigeria's Billion-Naira Reforms Keep Failing and How Smart Mon- itoring & Evaluation Can Finally Make Them Work



REFORM TALKS

with

Lawal Zakari

As rightly observed by global development experts - the missing link between policy promises and real results lies in systematic monitoring and evaluation. This fundamental insight has never been more relevant to Nigeria's governance challenges than it is today.

Every few years, Nigeria launches another ambitious reform program. The reforms include: economic, agricultural, digital, health, education transformation initiatives and programs among others. Each reform comes with fanfare, policy documents, and promises of transformation. Yet for millions of Nigerians, life remains largely unchanged. Why do these reforms consistently fail to deliver? The answer is not poor policies or insufficient funding—it is the persistent gap between what governments promise and what they actually deliver. Bridging this "implementation gap" requires something most Nigerian reform programs lack: robust implementation monitoring and evaluation systems to track progress, identify problems early, and course-correct when things go wrong.

Consider Nigeria's recent reform history. The National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) promised economic transformation in the early 2000s. The Transformation Agenda of 2011-2015 targeted infrastructure and economic diversification. The Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP 2017-2020) aimed to pull Nigeria out of recession and the post-COVID 19 Economic Sustainability Plan and the National Poverty Reduction with Growth Strategy (NPRGS 2021-2031) aimed at lifting 100 million Nigerians out of poverty within a decade. Recently also, President Tinubu undertook some economic reforms that include the Removal of Fuel Subsidy, the Market Exchange Rate reforms and the establishment of regional development commissions to address Nigeria's geographic diversity and region-specific challenges, focusing on sub-national infrastructure delivery, post-conflict recovery, and local economic development. Each had merit, yet tangible improvements for ordinary Nigerians remained elusive. This pattern repeats at state level too. Governors announce government initiatives, agricultural modernization programs, and healthcare reforms with great ceremony. Opposition parties criticize, civil society expresses scepticism, but the programs proceed anyway—often with minimal tracking of whether they're actually working. The result? Billions of naira spent with little to show for it, while citizens grow increasingly cynical about government promises.

The problems begin with how reforms are conceived and managed. Most Nigerian reform programs suffer from predictable weaknesses. Policy happens in isolation. Reforms are often designed in Abuja or state capitals with minimal input from the agencies that must implement them or the citizens they're meant to serve. When reality meets policy, the mismatch becomes apparent—but often too late to adjust course effectively. Nobody's really watching. While reforms may include monitoring components, these are typically compliance exercises focused on spending budgets rather than achieving results. There's rarely systematic tracking of whether programs are actually improving citizens' lives

Politics trumps evidence. When problems arise, the response is usually political rather than technical. Rather than examining data to understand what's working and what isn't, officials either blame external factors or simply push forward with original plans regardless of evidence.

Coordination breakdowns are inevitable. Nigeria's federal structure means most reforms require coordination between federal, state, and local governments. Without systematic monitoring of these relationships, coordination failures go undetected until they become crises. Capacity gaps get ignored. Many reforms assume implementation capacity that does not exist. Without monitoring these gaps, governments continue announcing ambitious programs while lacking the people, systems, or processes necessary to deliver them.

The solution is not abandoning reform—it is making reform work through systematic Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E). Think of M&E as the GPS system for government programs: it tells you where you are, whether you are heading in the right direction, and when you need to change course. Effective M&E does three critical things. It provides early warning systems. Rather than waiting until the end of a program to discover it failed, good M&E identifies problems while there's still time to fix them. It enables evidence-based adjustments. M&E generates the data needed to improve programs continuously. It creates accountability pressure. When program performance is tracked and reported regularly, it becomes much harder for officials to ignore problems or misrepresent results.

Nigeria actually has several examples of successful M&E driving reform effectiveness. The National Social Investment Programme reaches millions of Nigerians partly because it invested in systematic beneficiary tracking and payment monitoring. While the program faces criticism about long-term impact, its M&E systems enable it to demonstrate reach and identify implementation problems quickly. Lagos State's digital transformation succeeds where other states struggle because it combines technical innovation with systematic monitoring of citizen satisfaction and service performance. Regular feedback loops enable continuous service improvements. Kaduna State's public service reforms gained traction because they included comprehensive performance measurement systems that tracked both efficiency improvements and citizen satisfaction. This evidence base helped maintain political support despite initial resistance. These examples share common features: clear performance indicators, regular data collection, systematic analysis of results, and—crucially—using findings to improve program implementation.

For M&E to bridge Nigeria's implementation gap, it must be designed for Nigerian realities. Start with clear theories of change for the reform initiatives. Before implementing any reform, governments should articulate exactly how they expect activities to lead to desired outcomes. This provides the foundation for monitoring whether the theory is working in practice. Design for Nigeria's federal structure. M&E systems must work across federal, state, and local government levels while accommodating Nigeria's diversity. This means standardized frameworks that allow local adaptation. Leverage technology intelligently. Nigeria's mobile phone penetration and growing tech sector create opportunities for cost-effective data collection and real-time monitoring. But technology must serve clear purposes, not become an end in itself. Build internal capacity systematically. Rather than relying on external consultants, governments should invest in developing internal M&E expertise that can provide sustained support for reform programs. Engage citizens meaningfully.

M&E systems should include systematic mechanisms for collecting citizen feedback and demonstrating how this feedback influences program improvements. The government for effective citizen participation can leverage on the EYEMARK a citizen based Web Application designed and being operationalised by the National M&E Department.

To enhance delivery of reforms initiatives, Nigerian governments can start by selecting priority reform programs and retrofit them with basic M&E systems. Focus on simple indicators that can be tracked regularly and used for program management decisions. Strengthen the M&E units of the key reform implementing agencies with dedicated staff and clear mandates. Develop partnerships with Nigerian universities and National Monitoring and Evaluation Department of the Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning to build M&E capacities and expertise of the M&E Units of the Agencies. Once the selected reforms initiatives whose M&E has been strengthened prove their value, the government can then expand the strengthening of the M&E systems to additional reform programs. Similarly, to strengthen the institutionalization and sustainability of the M&E processes the government should embed M&E requirements in legislation and budget processes (legislate the current National M&E Policy of 2022 which has administrative approval only into law) to ensure continuity across political administrations.

Nigeria cannot afford continued reform failures. With a growing population, mounting development challenges, and increasing citizen expectations, the country needs government programs that actually work. The cost of building effective M&E systems pales in comparison to the resources wasted on ineffective programs and the opportunities lost through poor implementation. International experience demonstrates that countries with strong M&E systems consistently outperform those without them in delivering development results. Rwanda's post-genocide transformation, Botswana's sustained development progress, and Ghana's democratic consolidation all feature systematic M&E as a core component of effective governance.

Nigeria's reform challenge isn't unique, but its scale and complexity make effective solutions urgent. Moving beyond "hope-based implementation" toward evidence-driven reform management requires political leaders who value results over rhetoric and citizens who demand accountability for public investments. The building blocks exist: Nigeria has dedicated public servants, growing technical capacity, and increasing citizen engagement. What's needed is the political will to systematically track whether government programs are working and the institutional commitment to use that information for continuous improvement. M&E isn't a silver bullet—no single intervention can solve Nigeria's governance challenges. But it is an essential tool for making reforms work. Countries that master the art of implementation through systematic monitoring and evaluation consistently outperform those that don't.

For Nigeria to realize its vast potential, its governments must move beyond the cycle of policy announcement and implementation failure.

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