

NDDC Commits \$5 Million to Livelihood Project in Akwa Ibom, Imo, Rivers

The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) has committed an additional \$5 million to support the Livelihood Improvement and Family Enterprises in the Niger Delta (LIFE-ND) project across Akwa Ibom, Imo, and Rivers States. The initiative, implemented in partnership with the Federal Government and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), aims to transform rural economies through sustainable agricultural entrepreneurship. NDDC's Managing Director, Dr. Samuel Ogbuku, disclosed the commitment in Abuja following an inspection of incubator centres in the three states. He noted that the intervention will expand access to job creation and income-generating activities, especially for women and youth in rural communities.

Since August 2024, the NDDC has contributed \$2.5 million to the project and pledged a total of \$30 million to scale its reach. The broader LIFE-ND initiative is backed by a \$60 million IFAD fund and has been running since 2019 in Abia, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, and Ondo. The project adopts a community-driven incubator/incubatee model, which pairs experienced agro-entrepreneurs with new entrants for mentorship and practical training. Each participating state is expected to empower at least 4,250 beneficiaries over the six-year implementation period, ensuring gender balance.

Insecurity: 36 Gobs under fire over ₦375bn security votes

Amid rising insecurity and worsening public trust, the Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) has demanded that all 36 state governors in Nigeria disclose how they have spent public funds allocated as “security votes” since May 29, 2023—or face legal action. The call was made in a Freedom of Information (FoI) letter dated June 28 and signed by SERAP's Deputy Director, Kolawole Oluwadare. The organisation warned that failure to respond within seven days would trigger appropriate legal steps to compel accountability.

According to SERAP, the growing insecurity across Nigeria, including the recent Benue massacre, has made it imperative for governors to transparently explain how security votes—billions of naira disbursed annually—are being used. “In the wake of the Benue massacre and ongoing insecurity in several states, there is legitimate

public interest in knowing how these funds are spent,” SERAP stated in a release on Sunday. The group accused many governors of mismanaging or failing to utilize the funds effectively, arguing that their actions contravene Section 14(2)(b) of the 1999 Constitution which mandates government to ensure the security and welfare of the people. “Despite the vast sums allocated under the guise of security, governors have largely failed to deliver safety and stability to their states,” the group said. Security votes are funds allocated to governors and some federal officials, ostensibly to address security challenges without going through the usual public accounting procedures. Critics have, however, described them as slush funds due to the lack of oversight. Citing reports from 2021, SERAP noted that state governors and local council chairmen allegedly received over ₦375 billion in security votes, with little to show in terms of improved security outcomes.

The organization also referenced a Supreme Court ruling which clarified that the Freedom of Information Act applies to all levels of government—state governors included. SERAP warned that failure to disclose expenditure details would amount to a “grave violation of public trust” and a breach of anti-corruption laws. “The intense secrecy and lack of meaningful oversight of the spending of security votes by governors have for many years contributed to large-scale stealing of public funds,” the statement added. The letter urged governors to invite the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) to investigate and monitor security-related expenditures.

SERAP also referenced Nigeria's recent classification by the World Bank as a “fragile and conflict-affected” country—alongside Afghanistan, Sudan, and Mali—blaming corruption, mismanagement, and insecurity for the nation's dire economic and humanitarian crises. Reaffirming its legal readiness, SERAP said: “The judgment sends a powerful message that governors can no longer escape accountability for how they spend security votes. We urge all governors to promptly comply and uphold the rule of law.” This move could spark a new wave of pressure on state governments to end the long-standing culture of opacity in public finance under the pretext of security.

800 members, first batch of Special Operations Force to combat terrorism concludes training

The Honourable Minister of State for Defence H. E. Dr. Bello Mohammed Matawalle, MON, announced that the graduation of the first batch of

800 elite Special Operations Forces (SOF) represents a significant advancement in the Federal Government's commitment to combatting insecurity in Nigeria. The ceremony took place at Camp Kabala, Jaji, Kaduna. Dr. Matawalle emphasized that this initiative is part of the Federal Government's strategic commitment to enhance national security through advanced military training and collaborative operations. Under the leadership of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu GCFR, the government is undertaking comprehensive measures to modernize the Armed Forces, incorporating specialized training, state-of-the-art equipment, and integrated intelligence systems. Addressing the newly graduated troops, Dr. Matawalle stated, "You are now Nigeria's frontline guardians in our collective war against terror, banditry, kidnapping, and insurgency. You embody the resolve of our nation—proof that Nigeria will not succumb to fear." He reminded them that while they are equipped with world-class tools and tactics, victory in battle is determined by character, discipline, and unwavering commitment. As these elite forces prepare for deployment in high-risk areas, including Zamfara, Kaduna, and the North-East, Dr. Matawalle urged them to remember that their mission is not one of conquest, but of peace. "You carry not just arms, but the honour of the Nigerian Armed Forces and the hopes of every Nigerian—farmers, students, children, and elders. Be swift, be strategic, be just. Operate with precision. Fight with courage. Lead with honour. And always protect with humanity," he stressed. The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Defence, Ambassador Gabriel Tanimu Aduda, commended the dedication and resilience displayed by both the trainees and their instructors. "The Special Operations Forces are a vital pillar in our national defence architecture. Their elite skills are indispensable in countering insurgency, terrorism, and other evolving asymmetric threats," he stated. Ambassador Aduda reaffirmed the administration's commitment to building a modern, professional, and highly motivated military capable of addressing contemporary threats with precision and confidence.

In his remarks, Chief of Defence Staff, General Christopher Gwabin Musa, urged the graduates to uphold the highest standards of discipline and ethics. "The Armed Forces is a disciplined and dignified institution," he noted. "Let your moral compass guide every mission. Protect the innocent, uphold our laws, and honour your uniform." He expressed gratitude to Mr. President, Ministers of Defence, the Permanent Secretary, training directors, and all contributors to the success of the programme. The graduation of this first cohort of Special Operations Forces marks a significant milestone in Nigeria's ongoing efforts to enhance its defence capabilities and respond effectively to internal and external security challenges.

Nigeria's public debt hits N149.39 trillion in Q1 2025 – DMO

Nigeria's total public debt rose to N149.39 trillion as of March 31, 2025, marking a year-on-year increase of N27.72 trillion or 22.8% when compared to the N121.67 trillion recorded in the corresponding period of 2024. The latest figures from the Debt Management Office (DMO) also indicate a quarter-on-quarter increase of N4.72 trillion or 3.3% from N144.67 trillion as of December 31,

2024. This consistent upward trajectory in Nigeria's debt stock reflects both fresh borrowings and the impact of a depreciating exchange rate on external debt obligations. The surge comes amid ongoing fiscal pressures, rising revenue, and continued dependence on both local and foreign borrowing to fund the national budget. External debt climbs to N70.63 trillion, largely on currency effects. Nigeria's external debt as of March 31, 2025, stood at N70.63 trillion (\$45.98 billion), a significant jump from N56.02 trillion (\$42.12 billion) in the same period in 2024.

This represents a year-on-year increase of N14.61 trillion or 26.1%. In quarter-on-quarter terms, external debt rose modestly from N70.29 trillion in December 2024 — a marginal increase of N344 billion or 0.5%. However, while the dollar-denominated debt rose by \$3.86 billion year-on-year, the much steeper increase in naira terms highlights the underlying impact of foreign exchange depreciation on Nigeria's external liabilities. The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN)'s official exchange rate used for converting debt in Q1 2024 was N1,330.26 per US dollar. Although the specific rate for Q1 2025 was not disclosed, the growing gap in naira terms points to a weakened exchange rate, which directly amplifies Nigeria's repayment obligations on its dollar and euro-denominated loans. External debt obligations include borrowings from multilateral institutions such as the World Bank and the African Development Bank, bilateral sources, and commercial creditors, including Eurobond investors. The burden of servicing these debts in naira terms has become heavier as the local currency continues to slide in value, a trend that could deepen if reforms aimed at stabilizing the currency do not yield results.

Domestic debt nears N79 trillion, driven by fresh borrowings. The domestic component of Nigeria's debt also maintained an upward trend, reaching N78.76 trillion (\$51.26 billion) at the end of March 2025. This reflects a year-on-year increase of N13.11 trillion or 20% from N65.65 trillion (\$49.35 billion) in March 2024. On a quarterly basis, domestic debt rose by N4.38 trillion or 5.9%, up from N74.38 trillion in December 2024. The Federal Government alone accounted for N74.89 trillion of this total, while the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) jointly held N3.87 trillion. Interestingly, state-level domestic debt declined slightly from N3.97 trillion in Q4 2024 and from N4.07 trillion in Q1 2024. This may suggest more prudent borrowing by subnational governments or better debt service performance in the period under review. Domestic borrowing typically consists of government securities such as Treasury Bills, FGN Bonds, Sukuk, and Green Bonds. These instruments are used to plug the country's fiscal deficit and are generally seen as safer from exchange rate risk, although they come with their own interest cost burdens.

As of the first quarter of 2025, the composition of the total public debt showed a near-even split, with domestic debt accounting for 52.7% and external debt making up 47.3%. This represents a slight shift from the structure recorded in March 2024, when domestic debt had a higher share of 54% while external debt stood at 46%. The rising share of

external debt — especially in naira terms — underlines the currency risk that Nigeria faces with continued reliance on foreign borrowing. At the same time, the consistent increase in domestic debt signals the government's efforts to raise funds from the local capital market, despite concerns about high debt servicing costs and crowding out of private investment. Nigeria's public debt trajectory continues to raise questions about fiscal sustainability. With the total debt stock nearing the N150 trillion mark, concerns persist over the rising cost of debt servicing, which now consumes a significant share of the national budget.

Nigeria, conflict-affected economies face growing extreme poverty crisis – World Bank

The World Bank has warned that extreme poverty is growing rapidly in Nigeria and 38 other economies affected by conflict and instability, worsening hunger and pushing development goals further out of reach. The bank made this known in a statement released on Friday titled “Extreme Poverty is Rising Fast in Economies Hit by Conflict, Instability”, based on its post-COVID assessment of fragile and conflict-affected states. Nigeria is listed among the 39 economies the bank classified as being in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations, a group that includes Afghanistan, Sudan, Syria, Yemen, Haiti, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Venezuela, among others. “These countries include both those experiencing active conflict and others facing deep instability,” the statement said. In Nigeria's case, insecurity from banditry and kidnappings in the Northwest, and a prolonged insurgency in the Northeast, are cited as major drivers of fragility. According to the bank's findings, economic conditions in these fragile states have continued to deteriorate since the pandemic, even as other developing economies begin to recover. “Since 2020, their per capita GDP has shrunk by an average of 1.8 per cent per year, while expanding by 2.9 per cent in other developing economies. “This year, 421 million people are struggling on less than \$3 a day in economies afflicted by conflict or instability—more than in the rest of the world combined. “That number is projected to rise to 435 million, or nearly 60 per cent of the world's extreme poor, by 2030,” the report said. The bank stressed that while global focus has largely been on Ukraine and the Middle East in recent years, Africa bears the brunt of the crisis.

“For the last three years, the world's attention has been on the conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East, and this focus has now intensified. “Yet, more than 70 percent of people suffering from conflict and instability are Africans. “Untreated, these conditions become chronic. Half of the countries facing conflict or instability today have been in such conditions for 15 years or more,” the statement noted. “Misery on this scale is inevitably contagious,” said the World Bank Group's Chief Economist, Indermit Gill. The study also highlights why the global goal of ending extreme poverty has remained out of reach. “It is now

concentrated in areas of the world where progress is hardest to achieve,” the bank said. In countries facing conflict or instability, the extreme poverty rate stands at nearly 40 per cent, compared to just six per cent in other developing economies. Worse still, the economic stagnation in these fragile states has prevented job creation from keeping up with population growth. “In 2022, more than 270 million people were of working age in these economies—but barely half of them were employed,” the report said. “Economic stagnation—rather than growth—has been the norm in economies hit by conflict and instability over the past decade and a half,” said M. Ayhan Kose, the World Bank Group's Deputy Chief Economist and Director of the Prospects Group. He stressed that progress is still possible, saying, “The global community must pay greater attention to the plight of these economies. Jumpstarting growth and development here will not be easy, but it can be done—and it has been done before. “With targeted policies and stronger international support, policymakers can prevent conflict, strengthen governance, accelerate growth, and create jobs.”

APC Government has weaponized Poverty and fear driven reforms ...ADC

The African Democratic Congress (ADC) has claimed that the Tinubu-led presidency is gripped by panic following the rise of a powerful opposition coalition and the growing national appeal of the ADC. In a strongly worded statement released in Abuja, ADC's Interim National Publicity Secretary, Mallam Bolaji Abdullahi, accused President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's administration of “calculated incompetence.” He said recent moves by the government are not motivated by concern for the people but by fear of the opposition's growing influence and the looming 2027 general elections. Abdullahi was responding to remarks made by Bayo Onanuga, President Tinubu's Special Adviser on Information and Strategy, who recently announced government plans to dismantle obstacles to food security and export. The ADC spokesman questioned the timing of the administration's sudden focus on food and economic reforms. “Why now?” Abdullahi asked. “If these bottlenecks could have been removed all along, why did the government allow millions of Nigerians to suffer?” He described Onanuga's comments as “a confession” that the government had knowingly neglected the crisis. “Now, under mounting political pressure, they want applause for doing the bare minimum?” he said. “This is not reform. This is a desperate attempt to survive the backlash of their own failures.” Abdullahi claimed that it wasn't hunger or hardship that pushed the government into action, but fear—fear of a united opposition and the judgment of Nigerians in the 2027 elections. “The APC government has weaponized poverty. Their sudden urgency reeks of political calculation. They're not addressing a crisis—they're managing optics,” he stated. He also accused President Tinubu of launching an early re-election campaign to regain lost ground. “He knows Nigerians are fed up. Every move they make is now about 2027, not about helping the people.” According to the

ADC, the real turning point wasn't a humanitarian awakening but the emergence of a strong and united opposition capable of challenging the status quo. The party urged Nigerians to remain vigilant and see through what it described as political gimmicks.

CISLAC raises the alarm on perceived judicial corruption, calls for accountability and integrity in Nigeria's justice system

The Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC), the Nigerian chapter of Transparency International (TI), has raised serious concerns over the growing perception of judicial corruption in Nigeria, warning that this trend poses a significant threat to the nation's anti-corruption efforts, democratic stability, and the rule of law. In a statement issued by the Executive Director of CISLAC and Head of Transparency International Nigeria, Comrade Auwal Ibrahim Musa (Rafsanjani), the organization lamented that recent developments in the judiciary have undermined the credibility of law enforcement agencies such as the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), which have invested significant resources, time, and effort in prosecuting high-profile corruption cases only for such cases to be struck out by the courts. Comrade Rafsanjani particularly raised concerns about the rulings of Justice Chukwujekwu Aneke of the Federal High Court, who has dismissed several high-profile corruption cases despite what CISLAC described as "impeccable evidence." He cited the case involving former Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal Adesola Amosu, over the alleged misappropriation of ₦22.8 billion, as well as the ruling which cleared former Ekiti State Governor, Ayodele Fayose, despite testimony from former Minister of Defence, Musiliu Obanikoro, that ₦2.3 billion was delivered to Fayose in cash using two private jets. Other cases struck out by Justice Aneke include a \$140,000 fraud case involving Abdullahi Babalele, son-in-law of former Vice President Atiku Abubakar; a ₦322 million money laundering charge against Senator Peter Nwaoboshi; and the ₦12.3 billion case against the Chairman of Honeywell Group, Dr. Oba Otudeko. Comrade Rafsanjani said these rulings cast a dark shadow over the justice system and recall the controversial case of former Delta State Governor, James Ibori, who was acquitted in Nigeria but later convicted on similar charges in a foreign court. He stressed that no investor would be confident in a system where the judiciary is seen as unethical or as shielding corrupt public officials. He also called for financial scrutiny of judicial officers, urging the EFCC, the Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU), and related agencies to investigate judges whose lifestyles appear to be inconsistent with their legitimate earnings. He alleged that some judicial officers may be benefitting from undue political influence, including luxury housing allocations allegedly facilitated by the Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nyesom Wike, a development CISLAC described as compromising the independence of the judiciary.

CISLAC further urged the National Judicial Council (NJC) to restore discipline, integrity, and accountability within the judiciary, stating that the Council must not be silent while public

confidence in the courts erodes. It also called on the Code of Conduct Bureau (CCB) to enforce regular and transparent assets declaration by all public officials, including judges and judicial officers, as required by law. "The judiciary must rise above allegations of inducement and partisanship," Rafsanjani said. "Nigerians deserve a justice system that upholds the rule of law and protects the rights of the people, not one that serves the interests of the powerful. If the judiciary fails, democracy and justice are both at risk."

CISLAC concluded with a strong call for collective civic vigilance, urging citizens, the media, and civil society to hold the judiciary to higher standards of transparency and accountability. According to Rafsanjani, the time to act is now before judicial credibility is irreparably damaged in the eyes of Nigerians and the international community.

ECOWAS Mourns Buhari, Salutes Legacy Of Democracy In Africa

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has expressed deep sorrow over the passing of Nigeria's former President, General Muhammadu Buhari (Rtd), who died peacefully in the early hours of Saturday, July 12, 2025, in an hospital in the United Kingdom. He was 82. A retired military general and two-time leader of Nigeria first military head of state in the 1980s and later as a democratically elected president from 2015 to 2023. Buhari's death marks the end of an era for one of Africa's most prominent political figures. In a heartfelt condolence message issued on Sunday, ECOWAS, through its Commission President, H.E. Dr Omar Alieu Touray, paid glowing tribute to Buhari's immense contributions to democracy and regional cooperation in West Africa and beyond. "It is with deep sorrow that the world learnt of the passing of His Excellency General Muhammadu BUHARI, former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria," the ECOWAS statement began.

Speaking on behalf of all ECOWAS institutions, Dr Touray extended the Commission's condolences to Buhari's family, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, the Government of Nigeria, and the entire Nigerian people. "ECOWAS salutes the memory of this distinguished statesman whose invaluable contributions greatly advanced democracy and regional integration in West Africa and across the African continent," the message read. The statement, dated July 13 and released from Abuja, emphasized Buhari's enduring legacy and unwavering commitment to national development and continental unity. Buhari, who was widely known for his anti-corruption stance and discipline, was a central figure in Nigeria's modern political history. Under his leadership, Nigeria witnessed significant infrastructure expansion, improved public sector accountability, and a strengthened role in regional peacekeeping efforts. After his presidency, Buhari had maintained a quiet life, making occasional public appearances and offering commentary on national issues. His health had reportedly deteriorated in recent months, though his family had kept details private. As the continent mourns, ECOWAS concluded its tribute with a solemn prayer: "May his soul rest in paradise."