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# **14<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL NATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE EDO NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF USA AND CANADA**

## **CONVENTION THEME**

**EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION AND CULTURE FOR THE NEW MILLENIUM**

## **KEY NOTE PRESENTATION**

**HOW TO IMPROVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IN EDO STATE**

**BY**

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**ABUJA, NIGERIA**

**SEPTEMBER 3, 2005**

**NEWARK, NEW JERSEY, USA**

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## **Protocols**

### **Preamble**

Earlier this year, a cousin of mine staying in London, got a video recording of her Mother's burial in Benin City which she could not attend. As she watched this recording, her comment to me was that she could not believe that she actually grew up in Benin City and that it looked so dirty with no sign of progress. This was a 48-year-old woman who had only been in London for just about one year for the first time in her entire life. All of a sudden, Benin was backward and she was not interested in going back to be a part of it all.

The truth of the matter is that most of us in this room today, are interested in Edo State, are a part of the Edo State, have family in Edo State. However, how many of us, truly will go back to be a part of it all to truly make the Edo State what we would want it to be? As I seek to address the topic of my presentation, I would like to leave this question with you all. My experience in Government has taught me that you cannot stay on the fringes if you truly want development to happen. You have to be in it and play the leadership role you desire others to have, if truly we are all sincere about improving development.

Again, an article I read about Samsung in the September 5<sup>th</sup> edition of Fortune, should give all of us hope that nothing is impossible. Indeed, permit me to quote from some of the sections in this article:

"When the three year old Samsung Electronics began selling (cheap) black and white TVs in Korea in 1972, Sony was already a brand globally admired for its high quality transistor radios, tape players and Triniton color TV's. By 1995, Samsung was making memory chips, computer hard drives and innovative

products that helped power innovative products of name brand Japanese and American Companies”

“Samsung is now one of the most innovative, respected and profitable players in the consumer electronics and semi conductor business.”

“Samsung registers more US patents each year, 1600 in 2004 than Intel”

To make Edo State great is a task that can be done!, and it requires our individual and collective commitment to action

### **The Topic in Perspective**

Permit me to break down each of the components of the subject matter so that we all have a common understanding of the terminologies used

#### Who are the Youth?

A youth could be described according to the Webster New World Dictionary as:  
The period of time when a person is no longer a child but not yet an adult; An early stage of life or growth

In this context and to put this topic in perspective, my definition of the youth shall be all persons who fall within the age of 10- 24 years of age.

#### What is Youth Development?

Again, according to the Webster New World Dictionary, development is the act or process of causing to grow, expand or improve in some way. To enable us determine in which way we can view development in this context, we can

leverage on the theme of this conference which refers to Excellence in Education and Culture in the New Millennium.

Youth Development can therefore be seen from the perspective of the act or process of causing to grow the age group between 10 and 24 years of age in ways that would enable achievement of excellence in the new Millennium. Specifically, to guide us in certain parameters under which we can view development, we can borrow from the UN Millennium Goals as set out in Table 1, which have been set to be achieved by 2015 for all developing countries of which Nigeria is a signatory to. These goals therefore give us a context within which we can position development.

The Goals cover six (6) main areas:

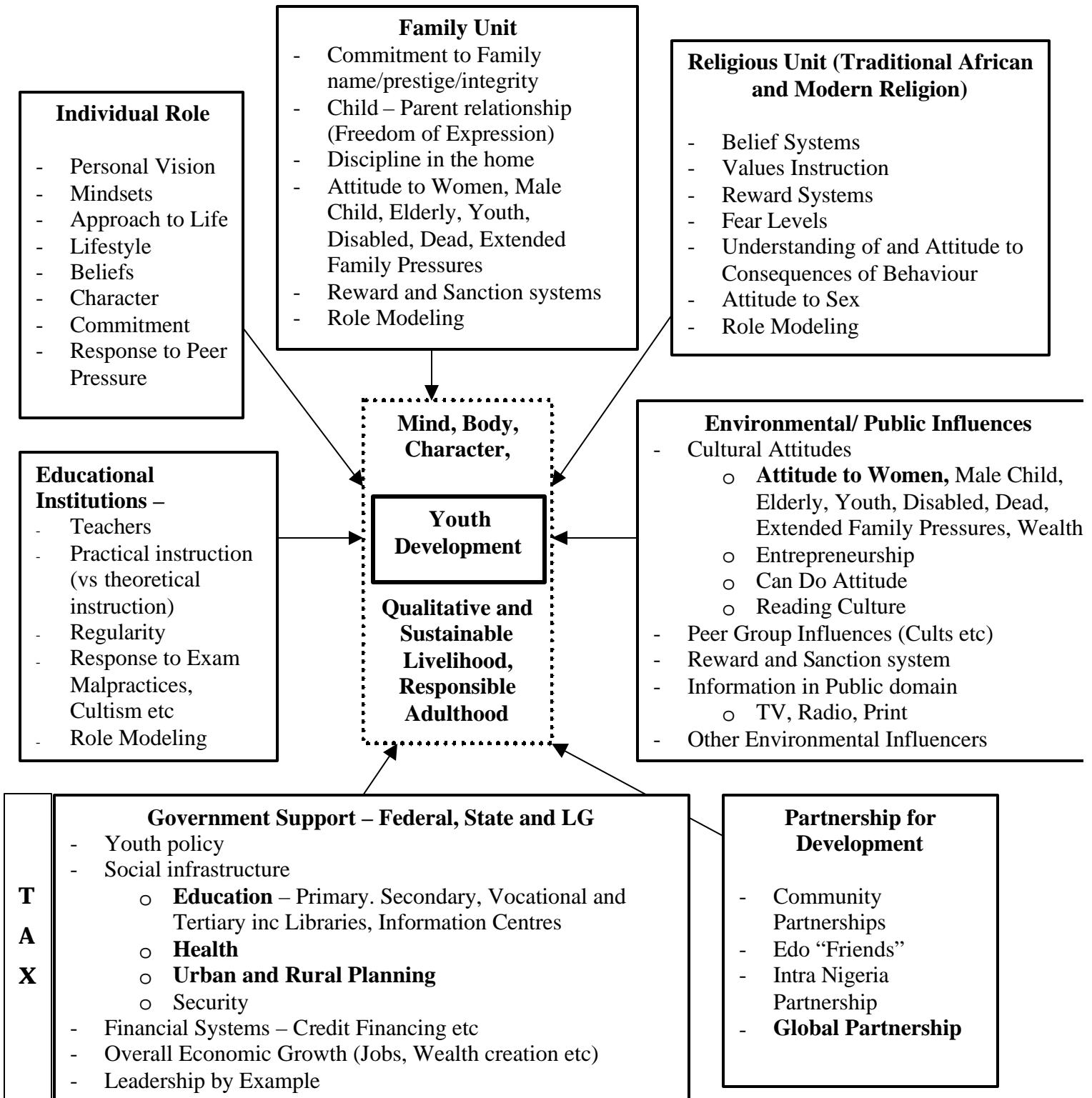
1. Extreme Poverty Eradication
2. Education
3. Gender Equality and Women Empowerment
4. Health Care
5. Environment Sustainability
6. Global Partnership for Development

Before we accept these goals as the universal principle of development, these millennium goals remind me of a story that I was told of recently after a radio interview programme I had on tax matters in Nigeria recently. I was directly accused that Government had the country's priorities wrong. That instead of setting and dictating our own agenda, we allow the international authorities to set our agenda for us. The most vivid example of this, was the story of a HIV/Aids counselor who was visiting prostitutes in Abuja to educate them about the perils of Aids and HIV. The prostitute apparently retorted that the

counselor should not waste her time because her problem was not Aids and that at least that one she can control. And that rather than focus on Aids, the Counselor should focus on how to reduce ritual killings in the Federal Capital Territory as that was her biggest problem!

Accordingly, therefore, beyond what the UN goals prescribe which incidentally has 7 of its 18 targets focused on Global Partnership for development alone!, I have thought through a much wider framework for development to guide our thought process which hopefully would be more encompassing and direct to our needs and support us in determining how we can galvanise ourselves to action.

## A Youth Development Framework in Perspective



The whole context of this framework is to represent an all inclusive approach to Development which recognizes all of the various components that contribute to development. As can be seen from the highlighted words just a few of these issues are addressed by the UN Millennium Goals. The message is simple, the development of our people is in our hands and it's a total and not selective approach to development!

### What is Edo State?

Edo State could be defined as a collection, gathering or nation of people of united yet diverse identity, who are mostly located in the mid western part of Nigeria, West Africa.

It was created on August 27, 1991 and was part of the then Bendel State of Nigeria and indeed the MidWest region which was created in 1963.

Accordingly, even though Edo State is roughly fourteen (14) years old with its capital situated in Benin City, as a group of people we can lay claim to a nation that was born by our individual will and aspirations 42 years ago, but subsequently divided into Edo and Delta States in 1991.

According to USAID reports, in 2002, Edo State was estimated to have a population of 2.86 million (In 1991, 2.1m, of which 50.13% were males) making it similar in size to Jamaica (2.74m), and larger than Botswana (1.6m) and Trinidad and Tobago (1.1m). The adolescents and young adults (10-24 years of age), account for 32% of the population. Making Edo State one of the States in Nigeria with a very high concentration of young people.

(You may also wish to note that based on the 1963 census and sample census, its estimated that about 43% of the population of Edo State is less than 15 years of

age. It is therefore likely that in line with the 1991 census figures distribution, over 60% of the State are made up of the age group of 24 and below.)

Edo State is made up of about eighteen (18) Local Government Areas scattered around the state namely:

1. Akoko Edo	2. Egor	3. Esan Central
4. Esan North East	5. Esan South East	6. Esan West
7. Etsako Central	8. Etsako East	9. Etsako West
10. Igueben	11. Ikpoba Okhan	12. Owan West
13. Owan East	14. Oredo	15. Orhionmwon
16. Ovia North East	17. Ovia South West	18. Uhunmwode

### Who Are The People Of Edo State?

Many communities in Edo State trace their descent to the ancient Benin Kingdom hence there is a lot of linguistic and cultural affinity among the communities. These communities include the

- Akoko Edo
- Afenmai
- Bini
- Esan
- Etsako
- Ora

There are also Igala, Igbira, Okpameri, Uneme Ososo, Urhobo, Izon and Yoruba speaking communities present in the State.

Notwithstanding the common ancestry of the various groups within the State, preliminary research conducted, suggest that the existing perceptions of Edo State people is quite varied depending on which cultural group is being analysed and who is analyzing whom. I wont go into the detail of the outcome of this research as researchers would fault me on the sample size used and research methods etc. Suffice it to say however, that we do have a very strong perception about each other. One common trend was the perception of the Edo Male, irrespective of ethnic group, to be perceived as very traditional in his perspective and approach to life regardless of his level of exposure. On the other hand there was no consensus on the Edo female, but it ranged from very hardworking, result oriented to reserved and peace loving.

The bonding of the Edo people is centered on the strong belief in traditional culture and various forms of worship, which has given a spiritual and temporal authority to the royal leadership present in the state. This notwithstanding, this traditional culture and form of worship is systematically being diluted by a move to modern religious faiths with an underlying rejection of the traditional form of worship. Sometimes this rejection being unfortunately downright hostile with no sense of appreciation/understanding of the underlying beliefs inherent in such traditional forms of worship. I dare say that the level of hostility may also be directly correlated with the kind of experience such persons may have had.

### **Where Are We with regard to Youth Development in Nigeria Today?**

In the context of the development framework introduced earlier, I will attempt using my personal views and experiences which in itself is limited to attempt a view of the current situation analysis. To the extent possible, attempts will be made to draw on related research that may have been done in the areas covered.

**a) Individual Role** (Personal Vision, Mindsets, Approach to Life, Lifestyle, Beliefs, Character, Commitment, Response to Peer Pressure)

Medicine has proven that the stuff an individual is made of is influenced by the genes of such individuals. In other words, we are who we are when we are born. However, it has also been proven that despite our genes, we can determine who we want to be. Therein lies the power of the individual spirit to decide, despite the environment and other influences around him or her to choose his future. In that regard, the development of the youth can be positively impacted by amongst others, the personal vision of the individual – what does he or she want to be, his or her approach to life, his lifestyle, his belief system, his commitment to a chosen goal and amongst others his response to peer pressure.

Like the great 19th century philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “Make the most of yourself, for that is all there is of you”.

Today youths nowadays have a very low self-esteem, and basically self-esteem is the foundation of a good life. Youths with high self-esteem are capable of making good decisions, are proud of their accomplishments, are willing to take responsibility for their mistakes and are able to cope with difficult situations. Self-esteem can be influenced by human and environmental factors. Once our youths have the feeling that they are being listened to, taken seriously and genuinely cared for and loved, their self-esteem would become high and this would lead to their self development. A sense of worthlessness or rejection greatly lowers self-esteem.

This is a factor that we do not pay as much attention as we should to the development of the youth. Given the power of the individual role in his or her own life, we can influence the direction such an individual can play by the way such a person is brought up, the information that such a person receives, the love

that we give such an individual and the hope we transmit to such an individual of the possibilities amongst others.

The strongest unit of influence in this regard is the family unit.

**b) Family Unit** (Commitment to Family name/prestige/integrity; Child – Parent relationship (Freedom of Expression), Discipline in the home, Attitude to Women, Male Child, Elderly, Youth, Disabled, Dead, Extended Family Pressures; Reward and Sanction systems, Role Modeling)

The family unit in Edo State has significant room for improvement based on our current level of attitudes that clearly determines who we are. On the positive side is the freedom with which children speak to their parents which sometimes is treated with incredulity by our Yoruba brethren. On the average, we have a much freer relationship with our parents and this encourages the Edo person to grow up independently minded. We should not give that up and indeed we can still improve on this as these happen to different degrees depending on the family involved. This enables the Edo youth to break away from home early to fend for him or herself. This notwithstanding, what would have been a very positive attitude is tampered by other attitudes within the family setup which rather than take the Edo person to all possible heights, limits his growth. One of such is the attitude to the male child. Women who do not have male children are treated as if they are nothing. What impact would that have on their girl child? Girl children who are not the first child are ignored in favour of the male child regardless of what position such a male child has in the family. What effect would that have on the male child? The result of some of this behavioral attributes is that we have male children especially the first male children, who grow up thinking that life is easy and not having to work or earn a decent living, depending on the largesse of his parents. Women also extend wasteful energies which would have been otherwise directed in bringing up children that they already had, in searching for a male child. We need to begin to seriously rethink

this perspective as it tends to dissipate energies. Besides, the preponderance of our people today are either Christian or Moslem. None of these religions demand a male child as heir. The good thing is that the effect on the girl child is to make our women tough and resilient to adversities. But if not properly directed could also lead such women folk astray because of a determination regardless of cost to self, to prove relevance to the family unit. Such energies properly directed, should be harnessed for a larger good.

Other factors that affect youth development include amongst others the level to which we feel committed within our family units to honour and protect the family name , its prestige and integrity. This is an all too powerful attribute which can propel an individual to greatness regardless of the adversities faced. Whereas this may occur in some family units, quite a number spend more time accusing the other of witchcraft, not meaning well for their siblings, envy amongst other things. Some youths do not even have a family name to protect in the first instance because of infighting caused by fighting for family property or other extraneous factors.

The Attitude to the Elderly, Disabled, Dead are also all important features. A youth that sees his father or mother not taken care of by society will not feel obliged to contribute to that society. Such a youth is more likely to rebel, enter cults and seek ways of creating his own units of protection and security.

The same with the dead. What we find today is that in Edo State we continue the old age practice of burying people in homes even as the society is changing and a vast number of people are leaving the country and are unlikely to return. What would happen to the bodies when such houses are eventually sold to others who are unlikely to value the dead? Indeed what is happening today especially in the large urban cities is that as houses are sold, the dead are being removed and in

some cases without any respect. We need to change with the changes going on in our society. The establishment of a modern cemetery that is taken good care of is long over due. It does not have to be done by the Government. It can be privately driven or driven by NGO's. What is important is that we need to build a society where the youth see that we truly respect our dead in a manner that will live beyond us.

In some families in Edo State, having a disabled child is a curse and such a child is locked up in his room and hidden from other relatives. What kind of development would that kind of youth have? We need to build a society that treats every child, be it male, female, disabled as a gift of God and give such a child all the attention that such a child deserves. That way we build a society that respects the other.

The influences on our family unit can be easily traceable to the religious and traditional institutions that govern our values and our behaviours

**c) Religious Unit (Traditional African and Modern Religion)** - Belief Systems, Values Instruction, Reward Systems, Fear Levels, Understanding of and Attitude to Consequences of Behaviour, Attitude to Sex, Role Modeling

Some time back, I happened to be in the same room with the late Prof Binitie – the renowned psychiatrist, and we got talking about the impact of traditional religion in the State. His perspective which I agree fully with is that the development of the State (and increasingly the Youth who are the ones who take the full brunt of it all) is increasingly being hampered by the fact that whereas our traditional religious institutions had very strong belief structures and rules of conduct which governed society, whether positively or negatively, such institutions are being replaced by the modern day religions which we do not understand and therefore have no significant impact on changing behaviour

positively. Increasingly, we are having a group of people who according to Prof Michael Porter ( if I use parallels in business strategy) who are “stuck in the middle”. We are neither here nor there. This may be a very general statement and I am sure that there are exceptions to this rule, however, the message is that the firm reward and sanctions as was understood in the traditional religions are not the same as in the modern day religion. We also have a transition period that we are currently going through where we hang on atimes to the past and still hold on to the new. We are exposed to Western Society yet we remain traditional players in our core sending confusing signals to all those that we relate with, including our children who represent the Youth of today.

We need as people to be clearer on our identities, believe in it and use it to propel us in all facets of our lives. We cannot afford to be stuck in the middle. If we are truly Christians for example, then polygamy should not be celebrated or indeed any child should be seen as a gift of God. If also we believe in our traditional religion, then we should go full stream ahead and not offer sacrifice in the night to our ancestors and in the morning go to church or the mosque. Lets stop leaving double lives. Stick to who you are, align it to what you do in every facet of your life and be proud of it.

We should be proud of who we are.

Some of us get bothered by the fact the typical Bini man is for example accused of having shrines in his family house. So what? If that is what our ancestors believed in, what is wrong in that? One of the strong factors of the Asian Countries lies in their strong belief systems which is driven by their traditional faiths which not only are they proud of, they actually celebrate. I understand that people flock to Bali in Indonesia just to be able to understand their culture and religion. Shrines are tourist attractions and the mode of worship is a source of

research and inquiry with a view to enhancing our knowledge of the World. Back home, we cringe at the thought that we are seen as “fettish” which incidentally is the white man’s word.

True development comes from clarity of who we are and comfort in who we are. We are losing what made us strong and what the Europeans feared so many years ago.

I was recently in Ottawa in Canada and took the opportunity to visit the Museum of Civilization. It was a wonderful experience. Therein, time and care as been taken to document and describe the history of the Canadian people. As I was given a gift of a totem king, I was also given the history and significance of the figure. As I flash back to Edo State, I ask myself, do I know the history of all the Bini Kings? Do I know the significance of the various head dress of the Obas of Benin over time?

True development starts with appreciating where you are coming from and using that as a lever to determine how much further you want to go as your own contribution to society. The youth in our society will eb much better off when they are rooted in a clear sense of who they are, a strong value system which drives their behaviours with a clear understanding of the consequences of any actions that may take.

The influence of the external environment in this regard cannot be underestimated

**d) Environmental/ Public Influences** – (Cultural Attitudes - Attitude to Women, Male Child, Elderly, Youth, Disabled, Dead, Extended Family Pressures; Entrepreneurship, Attitude to Wealth, Can Do Attitude, Reading Culture; Reward and Sanction systems; Role Modeling; Peer Group

Influences (Cults etc); Information in Public domain – TV, Radio , Print; Other Environmental Influencers)

The impact of the external environment be it within Edo State, Nigeria or the world at large is huge. Today, more youth in Edo State watch the European League than they do the Nigerian League. The youth are influenced by images they see on MTV and Channel O as well as what they read in the local Newspapers, when they do get to read. Or indeed all about the various war torn regions of the world on CNN or the various news about Nigeria or Edo State as presented on eth Edo news groups on the Internet. All these put together are quite frankly seldom positive (to the quest for excellence in education in the new millennium) if at all.

To harness and improve on youth development, we need to harness the external environment in such a manner that we can use it much more positively especially within the immediate Edo State environment.

We need to have newsgroups and websites that showcase what is positive and at the same time focused on encouraging future development of our youth and the State at large.

We should for example, sponsor more of entrepreneurial type programmes that teach the youth how to create wealth in a positive manner.

We should showcase our brothers and sisters here present today who have made good in life and can be role models for other Edo Citizens to follow. We do not even know ourselves, what we do, how we can help each other and leverage on each other. Websites devoted to just informing us of our achievements is long overdue. Networking and self support mechanisms is critical to development.

We can also do more in showcasing those positive aspects of the Edo Culture, which most of us do not truly understand such that we first understand , then harness elements of the culture for the good of all. An environment that depends on handouts from family members, as is the case today, is an environment that will be stunted developmentally.

A critical aspect of the environment which has a direct impact on the development of the Youth is the message passed through our formal educational institutions

**e) Educational Institutions** (Teachers, Practical instruction (vs theoretical instruction), Regularity of the School System, Response to Exam Malpractices, Cultism etc, Role Modeling)

According to a recent USAID initiative on young Adults and Adolescent Reproductive Health in Edo State which developed a five year Strategic Plan for adolescent and Reproductive Health in Edo State from 2004 – 2009, Edo State is noted to have one of the highest rates of school enrolments (primary and secondary levels) for young adults and adolescents compared to anywhere in Nigeria ( 76% of boys and 71% of girls). The State also has a high compliment of private and public schools. Indeed because of the semblance of sanity in some of our schools relative to some of the schools in N/America, some of us in the Diaspora send our children back home to attend school so as to enable them at least understand their roots.

Whereas this should be a strength, the converse is that there is a high dropout rate between the ages of 16 and 19 years, with only 50% school enrolment recorded during this period. This dropout occurs between the primary and secondary levels and also between secondary and tertiary levels. Whilst it would be useful to understand the underlying reasons for this very high dropout rate, I

can adduce two possible reasons. First is the lack of finance to continue education. This can be easily solved if we can as a community setup scholarship schemes for deserving indigenes who desire to continue education and cannot afford to.

The other more worrisome and perhaps major reason for the dropout trend may be the high prevalence of sexual trafficking and prostitution amongst the youth in the State, the penchant for crime at this age and the desire to travel abroad “for greener pastures”. According to the same USAID report, 39% of boys and 38.6% of girls know someone engaged in sexual trafficking abroad; 16% of girls have been offered assistance to go abroad for sex trafficking. Indeed special mention was made of Edo State in a recently published UN survey on Crime and Development in Africa (June, 2005). Quoting from this report – “with respect to women trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation in Europe, a large share are from Edo State while the rest are from Delta, Kano and Borno States”.

The impact on the development of these activities are enormous indeed and likely to be seriously underestimated. Amongst others, we have a generation of youth who are less inclined to handle traditional areas of work which would otherwise have provided a sustainable means of livelihood not just for themselves but by others who would have been employed by such means. We are creating a generation of youth whose only source of hope for their future is exploiting their body and others as opposed to making the most of their minds. We are wiping out a generation of youth who will lose their lives to HIV /Aids. The most unfortunate aspect of this trend is the role parents and family members play as they constitute the major drivers of such trade encouraging their children and family members to a life of futility and despair.

The UN Study on Crime and Development published in June 2005, is quite explicit, and I quote - “ Africa’s poverty has been documented, studied, and analysed many times over. Among the underlying factors are: -Historical causes<sup>1</sup>, Economic and Trade barriers<sup>2</sup> as well as Health conditions<sup>3</sup> .. All these factors provide a convincing account of Africa’s failure to develop. Yet, there is more that holds back Africa’s economic performance. These additional impediments are mostly disregarded by development aid providers and humanitarian agencies, though they are well known to African leaders: “...cross-border crime, illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons, drug trafficking, corruption and terrorism constitute serious threats to security and stability. They hamper the harmonious economic and social development of the Continent,” (Lome Declaration of the African Union Assembly, 12 vi July 2000)..... These unspoken development constraints – more than many others – aggravate the suffering of the African people, make the poor even more vulnerable, distort economic values, rob national budgets, dampen the entrepreneurial spirit, discourage foreign investment, promote capital flight, and perpetuate human suffering. They are at the very heart of Africa’s development challenges.”

A consequence of this state of affairs, for a group of people that are typically very enterprising and committed to any endeavour that they choose to be in, can be seen in the traditional creative bronze and wood industry of the Edo people

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<sup>1</sup> Historical Causes - Africa has suffered a long history of exploitation, with the successive impacts of the slave trade, colonization and, more recently, Cold War manipulation. Current national borders were imposed by the colonial powers without reference to culture, language, ethnicity, or to the economic viability of the states thus created

<sup>2</sup> Economic and Trade Barriers - Much of Africa is geographically separated from the major northern markets, and suffers from terms of trade that are to the continent’s disadvantage. African economies are also hampered by primary resource dependence. Agricultural productivity is low, and afflicted by periodic drought. Many African nations are struggling to recover from difficult periods of structural adjustment and crippling debt burdens

<sup>3</sup> Health Conditions - Malaria, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and a host of less widespread afflictions greatly impact on Africa’s peoples and economies

which in my view is dying if not dead. The quality of products being produced is declining at a very rapid pace and the craft is being handed over to those who hardly understand the underlying principles behind the crafts that they make, denigrating a product which was of international standard and repute.

The role of education in the development of youth and indeed society has been proven over and over again as we move from one society to the other be it N/America, Asia, Europe. A society without a properly educated population is dead.

In addition to the issues raised above, focus also needs to be placed on improving the quality of instruction, reducing the frequency of exam malpractices which have risen to quite alarming proportion such that teachers are actively involved in malpractices themselves, and reducing cultism in our schools. Recently I came face to face with a Youth cult at my Aunty's burial ceremony (OBITO!) and believe me it was not a pleasant experience. Yet, I see that such youth could be salvaged if only the right attention and love is given to them on a sustained basis. Only then can they have hope in a bright future.

For Edo State, our challenges are many as not only do we have to cope with the poor quality of the educational institutions themselves which we have to address in and by itself, we also have to deal with all the other social issues as well.

- f) **Government Support – Federal, State and LG** (Youth policy, Social infrastructure - **Education** – Primary, Secondary, Vocational and Tertiary inc Libraries, Information Centres; **Health; Urban and Rural Planning;** Security, Financial Systems – Credit Financing etc, Overall Economic Growth (Jobs, Wealth creation etc), Leadership by Example, Tax Policy and Administration)

Government plays an all important role in creating the enabling environment to encourage Youth development in the State through either a determined and concerted action to drive Youth Development through a well articulated policy or through the provision of the required infrastructure to support development be it in the area of Education, Health Care, Road Infrastructure or Wealth Creation in general.

The Edo State Government is not doing enough in these areas and significant improvement is required. Indeed the USAID report mentioned earlier noted that most of the programmes on adolescent and reproductive health in the State for example, are NGO driven and that there is limited government participation and resource allocation.

Yet, leaving it at the doorsteps of government alone is not the solution as the people of the State make up the kind of Government that it has. People hold governments accountable. People ask questions when answers received are not in line with expectations. People do not give up when solutions are not in sight but rather influence changes in persons elected or appointed to positions if the governments of the day is not meeting desired results. People ensure that their next door neighbours are not themselves a part of the problem and if so rather than celebrate his being a part of a government that is not effective, put such persons to shame.

I am reminded of the dictum that `a people deserve the government that they get or indeed one that I saw at a Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem recently – A nation is shaped by what its people tolerate``.

Let me digress a little to tell you that in preparing for this speech, a family friend of mine reminded me to make sure that I mentioned that the Edo State

Government is not doing its job. He gave as an example the bad Lagos to Benin Road which quite frankly, I must admit is a death trap as indicated in the pictures below....





Now after saying this, he mentioned to me that he was now in Abuja engaged in some Government business and just as he was about to give me his business card, suddenly remembered that I was a tax officer and quickly put his business

card back for fear that I will go after him!” Hmmmm. For every person that says that the other needs to improve, we should also ask to what extent we ourselves are also contributing to the problem!

So as we clearly recognize and spell out government’s role, the challenge I put to you is which one of you is willing to be a sincere part of Governance, to make the changes desired happen? If you are part of the problem and not the solution, then you have no moral justification to complain and indeed you should be ostracized from society as our ancestors did to such persons in the past.

I cannot end this discussion without discussing taxation as a main source of revenue for development. The current tax reform efforts in Nigeria at the National, State and Local Government level is oriented not just to increase revenues collected but also to use taxation as a means of introducing more equity in the society and encouraging voluntary compliance such that residents of the State and Citizens of Nigeria can be seen to pay their own quota to national and state development.

The ongoing tax reforms is also expected to take root in Edo State with the development of an autonomous and professional institution as a first step to supporting the development of the State. Tax reforms also mean facilitating the process of making the citizens increasingly demand accountability of Government such that tax payers monies are fully accounted for and linked to the development of the State. Giving our Youth hope of a future that they can be proud of and can relate with. Your views on the ongoing tax reform are welcome and I urge you all to please participate in the public hearings to be organized by the National Assembly in this regard. You should also get interested in ensuring that necessary state enactments are done at the State Assembly level.

**a) Partnership for Development** (Community Partnerships, Edo “Friends” , Intra Nigeria Partnership, **Global Partnership**)

Clearly the myriad of challenges required to achieve excellence in the new millennium are enormous. Indeed, Most of the issues discussed above, are not necessarily peculiar to the Youth of Edo State and are symptomatic of larger issues facing the Youth in the Country ion general,

However, to focus our thoughts and attention, we need to situate the youth within Edo State alone and deal with the challenges arising. Perhaps there from, we may set a role model for other States to follow.

We should therefore quit pointing fingers as to who is to blame and adopt an all inclusive approach to partnering for development be it amongst Edo Residents, Edo Indigenes, Edo friends, Edo in Diaspora or other groups focused on engendering development in the State.

Such partnerships have already commenced in some quarters but need to be intensified.

For example, Cassava Cultivation is increasingly becoming a “gold mine”. Edos in the Diaspora can have a collective fund or set up micro financing schemes, from where our youths back home can source from and hence make them self-reliant. Experience of others in other States has shown that Cassava cultivation can turn your ₦60, 000.00 into about ₦500, 000.00 in six months. You can even establish a Research institute at home from where our teeming youths can discover new ways of farming techniques. For now, the most popular area to invest in is cassava pellets, thanks to the international market that is yearning for it.

Another area to explore mentioned earlier, would be to showcase prominent role models of who have excelled in various spheres of life, as this will make them have high aspirations, high self-esteem which would eventually lead to better youth empowerment and hence prevent them from associating with the wrong crowd. The Public Image of the Edo State person is saturated with those involved with illegal and criminal activities yet we all know that there is a lot more to Edo State than what is presented.

Each Edo Citizen be it in Edo State, in Nigeria or in the global village needs to take at least one action that will contribute to the development of the Youth in the State not just at our nuclear family level but in such a manner that will impact the larger Edo State. What we need is more Action less Talk.

Collectively we will build our Youth, Collectively we will build our State.

## **Conclusion**

Youth development in general and in Edo state in particular, requires concerted efforts and planning from all arms of Government, Non-Governmental Organizations, agencies, communities and above all the immediate family.

Youth development is for a purpose, to achieve Excellence for the State in the new Millennium such that if we desire to make the United States home, we still have a place that we can go back and live the same (if not better) quality of life that we have become accustomed to. Staying connected to family who do not have to leave Edo State to live a better life. If we are all sincere to ourselves, that sense of connection is important. Very important.

In preparing for this speech, a fellow African mentioned to me that “no one should talk about the millennium in Africa, we only just started five decades ago. Quit comparing us with countries like Britain which set up its Project Transparency in 1867!”

Contrary to what this African may think, some of us believe that we can short cut the process and that it does not need to take us as long to develop Edo State and Nigeria as a whole.

However, we need to be realistic about the huge amount of work that needs to be done if we are indeed to catch up. Even if it is to have excellence in education and culture as a starting point! All hands must be on deck.

There is so much to do. Let it be known on our deathbeds that we did not just live, enjoying the benefits of all those who labored before us, for the various communities that we live in, but that we also contributed in our own small way to the development of Edo State we all call home. After all what is life all about anyway?

**Permit me to end with a few quotes from the CEO of Samsung Electronics:**

“The biggest barrier to ... innovation is the ego – a self that never changes”....

“You do not predict the future and then wait. You create the future”

... “We cannot live without change. The race for survival in this world is not to the strongest but to the most adaptive”– Jong-Yong Yun (CEO, Samsung Electronics)

Thank you all and God bless Edo State and the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

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**Table 1 A – United Nations Millennium Goals Summarised**

	<b>Development Areas</b>	<b>Goals</b>	<b>Targets</b>
1.	Extreme Poverty Eradication	<u>Goal 1</u>  Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	<u>Target 1</u>  Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day  <u>Target 2</u>  Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger

	<b>Development Areas</b>	<b>Goals</b>	<b>Targets</b>
2.	Education	<u>Goal 2</u> Achieve universal primary education	<u>Target 3</u> Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling
3.	Gender Equality and Women Empowerment	<u>Goal 3</u> Promote gender equality and empower women	<u>Target 4</u> Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and to all levels of education no later than 2015
4.	Health Care	<u>Goal 4</u> Reduce child mortality <u>Goal 5</u> Improve maternal health <u>Goal 6</u> Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	<u>Target 5</u> Reduce by two thirds, between 1990 and 2015 the under-five mortality rate <u>Target 6</u> Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio <u>Target 7</u> Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS <u>Target 8</u> Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases
5.	Environment Sustainability	<u>Goal 7</u> Ensure environmental	<u>Target 9</u> Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and

	<b>Development Areas</b>	<b>Goals</b>	<b>Targets</b>
		sustainability	<p>programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources</p> <p><u>Target 10</u></p> <p>Halve by 2015 the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and sanitation</p> <p><u>Target 11</u></p> <p>By 2020 to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers</p>
6.	Global Partnership for Development	<u>Goal 8</u> Develop a Global partnership for development	<p><u>Target 12</u></p> <p>Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable non-discriminatory trading and financial system; Includes a commitment to good governance, development, and poverty reduction—both nationally and internationally</p> <p><u>Target 13</u></p> <p>Address the special needs of the least developed countries;            Includes: tariff and quota-free access for least-developed countries' exports; enhanced programme of debt relief for HIPC s and cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous ODA for countries committed to poverty reduction</p>

	<b>Development Areas</b>	<b>Goals</b>	<b>Targets</b>
			<p><u>Target 14</u></p> <p>Address the special needs of landlocked countries and small island developing States</p> <p><u>Target 15</u></p> <p>Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term</p> <p><u>Target 16</u></p> <p>In cooperation with developing countries, develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth</p> <p><u>Target 17</u></p> <p>In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries</p> <p><u>Target 18</u></p> <p>In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications</p>

Table 1B : - United Nations Millennium Development Goals and Indicators for Measuring Progress

<b>Goals and Targets</b>	<b>Indicators for Measuring Progress</b>
<b>Goal 1 Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger</b>	
<u>Target 1</u> Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day	1. Proportion of population below \$1 (PPP) a day 2. Poverty gap ratio (incidence x depth of poverty)
<u>Target 2</u> Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger	3. Share of poorest quintile in national consumption 14 4. Prevalence of underweight children under five years of age 5. Proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption
<b>Goal 2 Achieve universal primary education</b>	
<u>Target 3</u> Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling	6. Net enrolment ratio in primary education 7. Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach grade 5 8. Literacy rate of 15- to 24-year-olds 11
<b>Goal 3 Promote gender equality and empower women</b>	
<u>Target 4</u> Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and to all levels of education no later than 2015	9. Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education 10. Ratio of literate women to men ages 15–24 11. Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector 12. Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments
<b>Goal 4 Reduce child mortality</b>	
<u>Target 5</u> Reduce by two thirds, between 1990 and 2015 the under-five mortality rate	13. Under-five mortality rate 14. Infant mortality rate 15. Proportion of one-year-old children immunized against measles 6
<b>Goal 5 Improve maternal health</b>	

<b>Goals and Targets</b>	<b>Indicators for Measuring Progress</b>
<b><u>Target 6</u></b> Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio	16. Maternal mortality ratio 17. Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel
<b><u>Goal 6</u> Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases</b>	
<b><u>Target 7</u></b> Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS	18. HIV prevalence among pregnant women ages 15–24 19. Condom use rate of the contraceptive prevalence rate a. Condom use at last high-risk sex b. Percentage of 15- to 24-year-olds with comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV/AIDS 20. Ratio of school attendance of orphans to school attendance of non-orphans ages 10–14
<b><u>Target 8</u></b> Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases	21. Prevalence and death rates associated with malaria 22. Proportion of population in malaria-risk areas using effective malaria prevention and treatment measures 23. Prevalence and death rates associated with tuberculosis 24. Proportion of tuberculosis cases detected and cured under directly observed treatment, short course (DOTS)
<b><u>Goal 7</u> Ensure environmental sustainability</b>	
<b><u>Target 9</u></b> Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources	25. Proportion of land area covered by forest 26. Ratio of area protected to maintain biological diversity to surface area 27. Energy use (kilograms of oil equivalent) per \$1 GDP (PPP) 28. Carbon dioxide emissions per capita and consumption of ozone-depleting chlorofluorocarbons (ODP tons) 29. Proportion of population using solid fuels
<b><u>Target 10</u></b> Halve by 2015 the proportion of	30. Proportion of population with sustainable access to an improved water source,

<b>Goals and Targets</b>	<b>Indicators for Measuring Progress</b>
people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and sanitation	urban and rural 31. Proportion of population with access to improved sanitation, urban and rural
<u>Target 11</u> By 2020 to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers	32. Proportion of households with access to secure tenure
<b>Goal 8</b> Develop a Global partnership for development	

<b>Goals and Targets</b>	<b>Indicators for Measuring Progress</b>
<u><b>Target 12</b></u> <p>Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable non-discriminatory trading and financial system</p> <p>Includes a commitment to good governance, development, and poverty reduction—both nationally and internationally</p>	<p><i>Official Development Assistance</i></p> <p>33. Net ODA, total and to least developed countries, as a percentage of OECD/DAC donors' gross national income GNI</p> <p>34. Proportion of total bilateral, sector-allocable ODA of OECD/DAC donors to basic social services (basic education, primary health care, nutrition, safe water and sanitation)</p> <p>35. Proportion of bilateral ODA of OECD/DAC donors that is untied</p> <p>36. ODA received in landlocked countries as proportion of their gross national incomes</p> <p>37. ODA received in small island developing States as proportion of their gross national incomes</p>
<u><b>Target 13</b></u> <p>Address the special needs of the least developed countries</p> <p>Includes: tariff and quota-free access for least-developed countries' exports; enhanced programme of debt relief for HIPC s and cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous ODA for countries committed to poverty reduction</p>	<p><i>Market Access</i></p> <p>38. Proportion of total developed country imports (by value and excluding arms) from developing countries and from the least developed countries, admitted free of duties</p>
<u><b>Target 14</b></u> <p>Address the special needs of landlocked countries and small island developing States</p>	<p>39. Average tariffs imposed by developed</p>

<b>Goals and Targets</b>	<b>Indicators for Measuring Progress</b>
<u><b>Target 15</b></u> Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term	countries on agricultural products and textiles and clothing from developing countries 40. Agricultural support estimate for OECD countries as a percentage of their gross domestic product 41. Proportion of ODA provided to help build trade capacity  <i>Debt sustainability</i>  42. Total number of countries that have reached their HIPC decision points and number that have reached their HIPC completion points (cumulative) 43. Debt relief committed under HIPC Debt Initiative 44. Debt service as a percentage of exports of goods and services
<u><b>Target 16</b></u> In cooperation with developing countries, develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth	45. Unemployment rate of 15- to 24-year-olds, male and female and total
<u><b>Target 17</b></u> In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries	46. Proportion of population with access to affordable essential drugs on a sustainable basis
<u><b>Target 18</b></u> In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications	47. Telephone lines and cellular subscribers per 100 people 48. Personal computers in use per 100 people 49. Internet users per 100 people

