

# The Way Forward

April 12

# 2014

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The pioneer Visionaries Hub Hangout, tagged “Networking, a tool for youth development and nation building” is an initiative of Visionary Impact Netwox; a youth consultancy and management social enterprise.

The youth forum focused on Leadership and citizenship, Youth and government policies, development opportunities, gender inclusion and education; and from the insightful deliberations the documented submissions were made and also the role of youths towards driving them, were highlighted.

**Summary report on  
the forum and  
proposed solutions  
for youth  
development and  
nation building.**

*We live in an age when to be young and to be indifferent can no longer be synonymous. We must prepare for the coming hour. The claims of the Future are represented by suffering millions; and the Youth of a Nation are the trustees of Posterity.*

**Benjamin Disraeli** (1804-1881) British politician and author

The first step to change is to be aware of the problem, and that in part was what we hoped to achieve through the **Visionaries Hub Hangout**. The hangout had in attendance youths from various endeavors and age range, as well as elder citizens who through their work and involvement in nation building have proven to be true citizens and leaders in every ramification. The hangout which focused on: Youth and government policies, Leadership and citizenship, Youth development opportunities, Gender Inclusion and Education; was a proof in itself of the readiness of Nigerian youths towards changing the status quo and serve as nation builders.

The event was anchored by Young-multi talented political science undergraduate/ MC / writer/Radio-OAP **Mr. Chuks Asoegwu**, who addressed the audience on the objectives and goals of the Hangout in order to create the needed ambience for the day's agenda.

#### **OBJECTIVE**

*The Visionaries Hub Hangout is a social forum designed for Nigerian youths across all sectors and elder Nigerians to come together with unity of purpose to deliberate and network in a relaxed environment, concerning our national challenges and through dialogue proffer feasible solution, which we believe will reform the mindset of participants both physically present and those online to see hope in Nigeria as a nation and their own part in it besides government.*

#### **FORUM GOALS:**

- *Gain insight from speakers on key areas of focus in relation to youth development and nation building*
- *Highlight and discuss national developmental issues with a solution oriented perspective, in order to provide feasible solutions using available resources and individual capacities*
- *Highlight avenues through which youths can influence the existing state of things in the continent with a focus on Nigeria*

The event kicked off with the recital of the National anthem and prayers, random introduction of selected audience members on their current pursuit/occupation and how it translated into nation building; this was to drive the mentality that even our activities and occupation should have a direct or indirect impact towards nation building; after which the welcome address was presented by **Mr. Abidemi 'Babaolowo' Oderinlo** a young Social Activist, Media Expert and writer who currently serves as the Icon (President) of Read2Lead Africa.

*Below is an excerpt from his address:*

*"...I am Human, African and Nigerian in that specific order of priority. Yes! The most important element of my identity is being human.*

*We are here as visionaries and nation builders to chart our nations course "Through Any Means Necessary."*

*For the purpose of this gathering, our means are simple and include:*

- *Innovation*
- *Entrepreneurship*
- *Youth Empowerment*
- *Leadership*
- *Activism*

*Above all, by becoming the change we want to see.*

*"We don't need everybody for this vision, who we need is YOU".*

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**The forum** proper commenced with the introduction of the panelist/speakers of the day who went on to stir the audience with their inspiring and enlightening speech on the various foci of the forum.



The First speaker **Ms Yemisi Ransome-Kuti**, (Founder, Nigerian Network of Non-Governmental Organization) spoke expertly on *leadership and citizenship*, as well as *development opportunities as regards job/wealth creation*, carried the audience along in her maternal yet articulate charisma on the following areas:

**Leadership:** She critically analyzed and itemized the difference between rulers and leaders, and rightly identified that although Nigeria has been through thick and thin, the only time the nation has experienced leadership was probably during the era of the Muritala Mohammed, a military president, at other times, even in democracy, all we've had are rulers. She went on to highlight several qualities of a leader, which are:

- Honesty, courage and exemplary living
- Good values and work ethics
- Ability to delegate and not dictate
- Have clear visions and goals without it being a burden or duty for the followers
- Creative and team spirited
- Must have a sound intuition capability
- Must have guts
- Must be able to aspire and inspire
- Must be a hard worker (not necessarily physical work) and appreciate hard work
- A leader must lead him/herself aright by being accountable

Rounding up on leadership, she clearly stated that "Every leader must take responsibility because everything starts and ends with you as a leader no matter who does the work".

**Citizenship:** The duty of citizens is not to cry foul and complain, their role is to act and act. Citizens must:

- Hold government accountable
- Make input to policies
- Be responsible and accountable in their activities within and outside the country
- Defend the poor, weak and physically challenged in the society
- Pay taxes and duties
- Demand the effective use of their taxes and duties

**Entrepreneurship/Job Creation Opportunities:** Leveraging on her role as a member of the Job Creation Committee of the Ministry of Finance, Federal Government of Nigeria, she shared some of the identified areas/industries that have the capacity to provide job opportunities as well as wealth creation for potential entrepreneurs, which include:

- SMEs: Create a value chain around big businesses using small businesses for growth and development; Provision of loans and small rates
- Agriculture and Agro-allied Industries
- Building and Construction
- Sports
- Education
- Health
- Manufacturing
- Entertainment
- Technical and vocational skills

In her closing remark, she mentioned that it was up to us the youths to continue the struggle they started years ago in order to ensure that we have a netter and sustainable nation as regards leadership and development. Also, she offered to share the report on Job creation with attendees of the hangout through the Organizers of the event.



The second speaker for the day was **Dr. Joe Okei-Odumakin**, (President, Women Arise for Change Initiative) who spoke on the topic: *Gender Inclusion and Nation Building*, before her speech the audience were given the privilege to preview a 5minutes video clip of her struggles and international commendation from the President of the United States of America, Barrack Obama and his wife Michelle Obama, alongside other international delegates present.

The video clip in itself stirred a mixture of feelings of which patriotism, courage and passion were key in the hearts of those present. She went on to speak on her various exploits and activities as an activist, berating the state of lawlessness in Nigeria and calling for the youths to do more of acting and less of talking. She noted to the participants on how the constitution has succeeded in trampling on the down trodden and why the women and children are always at the receiving end in most cases. She called for a re-awakening among the youths, telling them that it is their duty to put the government to work and not the other way round.

In her talk, she listed clearly that:

- The present Nigerian constitution has the structure of rulership which is a symbol of the military, rather than the design of leadership; hence the excess power given to law enforcement agents which is being abused.
- The constitution lacks provision for the weak members of the society and on a large scale only empowers the corrupt
- Its structure is lacking in the area of proper health care system for both the organized labor force and those outside it.
- Deprives youths the opportunity to participate in active governance through unreasonable age restrictions, in the electoral act for elective posts.

She recommended that our constitution should be amended to be a civilized civilian-driven document that allows inclusion of the people in the process of leadership. She expressed her desire to inspire more youths into action and prayed that more minds like those present at the hangout will step out to demand a new Nigeria like she's been doing for the last 20 years without relenting.



After the standing ovation Dr Joe Okei-Odumakin's speech received, **Mr. Durotimi Adeboye** (Project director/CEO, Global Education Media) who was the Keynote speaker, took to the podium to address the audience on the *Role of Education and Nation Building*. He started his speech by sharing the chat he had with the President and Organizer of the event, **Ms Cynthia Asoegwu** on the existing perception of youths as regards education and the high level of youth unemployment.

He went on to establish the fact that going to school and graduating is not an automatic entitlement to a job, he opined that graduating is only a proof that you are trainable and not a license for employers to put you in an air conditioned office and pay you huge salary. He encouraged everyone to see education as a form of empowerment to attain a better life and future and not a guarantee. He stated that most employers are not as

educated as their employees but they developed their capacity beyond their level of education and set-up companies that provide jobs. Following that, he recommended:

- Education is key and acquiring knowledge is non-negotiable
- Being educated does not automatically transform to being employable
- Youths must exchange the “ I must get a job” mentality, with “I must create or add value”
- Kill the entitlement mentality because it creates room for frustration
- Where we are is as important as where we are headed, start from there and be responsible

He ended his speech by admonishing participants to see education as an opportunity and to create value out of the wealth of knowledge acquired through the educational system.



The speech segment ended with a brief but expository talk from **Mr. Adedayo Thomas**, (Executive Director, African Liberty), who spoke on *Youth and government policies* and categorically stated that the place of the government is to developed policies that favor the citizens and set-up structures for sustainable development.

He called on the youths present to actively challenge unreasonable policies as it is their right to do so, he went on to speak on the need for free markets and creation of room for private sector involvement in key areas of the economy, stating that no government owned company is in existence till date showing that government alone lacks the capacity to indulge in business structures and hence should focus on establishing policies and laws that are favorable to economic and social development as this is the key to becoming a nation of repute.

He closed by noting that it is our right as youths to hold our leaders accountable to their policies and laws; and be proactive and responsible to make educated demands of those in leadership rather than acting in complacency.

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Other features of the hangout included a musical performance by young artist and ICT enthusiast **Somto Alpachino**, a talk-show segment to showcase the endeavors of enterprising youths who are leveraging on existing opportunities against all odds because of their believe in the nation’s potential.

The talk-show featured **Ms Adetoun Akitoye**, Founder of Mademoiselle(an NGO focused on the development of female teenagers), **Mr. Ebuka Mbaegbu**, CEO Kraftweez International, (a design and art oriented enterprise), **Mr. Afam Asoegwu**, an

environmental management consultant and contractor (CEO, Environsafe Nigeria) and was anchored by talk-show host/ Compere / Mc/ Humorist **Mr. Nnaemeka Chukwuma**.

The closing remarks were given by **Mr. Ojo Madueke**, Politics writer, This Day Newspaper and the President's speech and vote of thanks was delivered by **Ms Cynthia Asoegwu** (President, Visionary Impact Netwox). The program came to an end with the recital of the 2<sup>nd</sup> stanza of the national anthem and pledge.

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## **FORUM SUBMISSION**

**The Visionaries Hub Hangout** was an inspiring and revealing gathering of passionate individuals that are indeed committed to the Nigerian project. As youths, we are the backbone that can lift this nation into greatness, for inside us lies unlimited ability and solution to every problem that exists around us, but we have to decide to develop ourselves for our own benefit, and our society at large!

Based on the speech, dialogue, answers and participant's feedback, a submission on the way forward was compiled and split into the following sections:

### **Our problems/ challenges to development**

- Wrong mindset as a people as regards leadership and nation building
- Misplaced priorities, as we are more result oriented and not process oriented, celebrating the seen outcome without questioning the process involved
- Wrong value system as values such as integrity, unity and love for ourselves as a nation irrespective of ethnicity or tribe or religion has been eroded, leading to acts driven by selfishness which is straining dangerously against the fabric of our unity as a nation.
- Religious inclination that promotes mental limitation, causing people not to ask relevant questions
- The overall perceived laxity of the youths as persons not ready for leadership due to our poor involvement in matters of the nation that concern us; poor display of our ability to take initiative
- High level of non-challance, "much talk, less action" and inability to unitedly demand accountability from existing leaders on enacted policies and promises.

### **Our Role as Youths**

- Define our purpose and vision; be diligent towards achieving it, hence being a solution rather than a part of the problem
- promoting the right mindset as regards nation building amongst our sphere of influence

- Make educated demands of Government to build relevant structures and systems that promote development
- Access available opportunities for development
- Embrace resourceful and innovative thinking
- Develop ourselves within the existing avenues such as the internet and take advantage of opportunities for knowledge transfer from elder citizens through seminars, mentoring etc.

## **The Way Forward**

There is a need for the provision of a platform to allow transferral of knowledge and to bridge the gap between our elders and we the youths to enable proper understanding of our current situation and to aid us in charting a course for a better future.

The past is relevant; because if we do not take it into consideration we might repeat the mistakes of our elders rather than learn from them, as our challenge as a nation is not restricted to bad leadership, but we as citizens have a role to play.

From the shared report on entrepreneurship and job creation opportunities, further insights were derived which shaped the proposed solutions derived from the forum. The list below contains the proposed solution as regards national economic and social development:

### **Leadership and Government policies**

- High level of transparency and disclosure in government affairs
- Social welfare policies for the poor, homeless, unemployed and physically challenged
- Trade liberalization
- Market driven and strong financial policies
- Provide incentive for private sector investment in key industries and upgrade of local infrastructure
- Attraction of foreign investment in technology, medicine and manufacturing
- Building up of foreign reserves
- Developing of economic structures that leverage on domestic consumption to drive economic growth
- Economic diversification; reducing economic dependence on oil
- Industrialization
- Open market for local contents and products
- Support for local industry and granting of license to more local industry in the free trade zones
- Infrastructural support for startups in the local terrains
- Fiscal policy incentives



- Lowering interest rates
- Expansionary spending on critical infrastructure
- Protectionist policies for selected local industries and sectors
- Bailout funds to help endangered key local businesses, firms and industries

**Education and Youth Development**

- Man power development; substantial investments in public and private education
- Resuscitate the Support A School Initiative (SASI) and introduce tax breaks to private sector partnership
- Improve welfare of teachers and review remuneration structure to make teaching profession attractive as a means for job creation
- Incorporation of vocational and entrepreneurship training into the education system; all levels
- Revise school curricula at all levels to reflect modern day realities such as technology procedures and entrepreneurship
- Ensure employability training programs for graduates to bridge the present skills gap
- Construction of more primary and secondary schools to meet the UNESCO standard, to create job opportunities and improve fallen state of education

*N.B: The national report on job creation was developed based on the study and analysis of benchmarked countries (USA, Germany, Norway, Brazil, China, Malaysia, Chile, Indonesia, South Africa).*

**PARTNERS/SUPPORTERS**

The pioneer edition of the **Visionaries Hub Hangout**, was made possible due to the support of our partners, which shows that the vision of a better Nation is not far-fetched. The VHUB HANGOUT was a success thanks to our esteemed guests and the following partners:

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- Mr. Philip Obobo
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- Mr. Ebuka Mbaegbu
- Ms. Adetoun Akitoye, Mademoiselle
- Mr. Nnaemeka Chukwuma
- Mr. Ojo Madueke
- Mr. Afam Asoegwu, Environsafe Nigeria

### **ORGANIZATIONS**

- Kings Royal Majesty Furniture
- Prinatan International
- Ella Fashion Magazine
- Idea Builders Initiative
- Africa Liberty
- Kraftweez INC
- Dynamic Creations

### **SPEAKERS**

- **Ms Yemisi Ransome-Kuti** (Founder, Nigerian Network of Non-Governmental Organization)
- **Mr. Durotimi Adeboye** (Project Director/ CEO, Global Education Media)
- **Dr Joe Okei-Odumakin** (President, Women Arise for Change Initiative)
- **Mr. Adedayo Thomas** (Executive Director, African Liberty)
- **Mr. Ikeddy Isiguzo**, (Chairman Editorial Board, Vanguard Nigeria)

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### **PROJECT TEAM**

- Mr. Okey Chigbu
- Mr. Somto Asoegwu
- Mr. Chuks Asoegwu
- Mr. Abidemi Babaolowo Oderinlo
- Ms. Cynthia Asoegwu

## **THE ORGANIZERS**

**Visionary Impact Netwox** is a social enterprise registered in November 2011, as a part of the solution to the challenge of gross youth unemployment after in-depth research and analysis.

Our aim is to complement existing solutions and strategies, as well as bring visibility to other youth led / focused initiatives in order to increase reach and access of their benefits to a larger youth audience and create a synergy of network member's capacity.

The situation of the Nigerian youth is peculiar as our challenge is beyond the inability of the government but one that is environmental based on the general mindset and under-developed capability of the average Nigerian youth.

Visionary Impact Netwox is a youth consultancy and management social enterprise that has worked with several youths in various capacities, providing the following services: research and consultancy for start-ups, talent management, career exploration programs for public secondary schools with endorsement from the Lagos state Ministry of Education, online brand advertising and management, to mention but a few.

Our core focus as a network is to provide a platform for youth capacity development and productive engagement. Our aim is to leverage on the individual capacity of our members and affiliates to work towards achieving a common goal: **Nation Building through Youth Empowerment.**

### **OUR VALUES:**

- Innovation
- Empowerment
- Leadership
- Nation Building

### **OUR SERVICE FOCUS:**

- Career consultancy and management: this includes teens development programs, Human resource management, trainings and outsourcing
- Brand Communications and Online advertising/management
- Idea / Project development and management

### **OUR INITIATIVES**

As a network we have developed the following initiatives as a part of the solution to complement already existing strategies by government and concerned bodies towards developing a better society and they include:

**Visionary Teens Career Exploration Program:** it is a development program targeting teenagers and young adults mostly those within the secondary schools to provide career planning information and tools based on skills, interest and societal relevance, as well as promoting leadership, entrepreneurship, ICT and relevant skills development. We are in the process of setting up Visionary Teens Club in 23 public secondary schools in Lagos as a sustainability plan.

**The Big Brothers Network:** Teenagers tend to respond better to people they can relate to as their older siblings; hence the Big Brothers Network comprises of older youths who are enterprising and are passionate enough to mentor teenagers and young adults in the area of personal and career development.

**Visionarieshub.com:** Our online collaborative platform, designed to serve as the social space for Africa's foremost Social Think-Tank, with features such as: library, blog, social networking platform, business/classified directory, free consultancy and event/opportunity updates and much more. It is our vision for it to serve as a social youth development platform.

**The Avante-Garde Network:** as part of our empowerment plan, we are constantly seeking out and developing avenues through which we can help members generate the needed funds to give life to their dreams through the use of acquired skill and inner capability.

## **STAY IN TOUCH WITH US...**

### **e-Mail:**

visionaryimpact@gmail.com  
admin@visionarieshub.com

### **Contact Number:**

+2348130977877

### **Websites:**

www.visionaryimpactnetwox.com  
www.visionarieshub.com

### **Social Media:**

@visionaryimpact @visionarieshub / facebook.com/vhubhangout07