

# EXCELLENCE

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SUSTAINING **EXCELLENCE**,  
**INSPIRING** INNOVATION



# MEET THE EXCELLENCE TEAM

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# FROM THE PUBLISHER

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**Professor Abdullahi Yusufu Ribadu, *FCVSN***  
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# SUSTAINING EXCELLENCE, INSPIRING INNOVATION

Nigeria's higher education landscape is entering a bold new chapter, one defined by innovation, collaboration, and global relevance. This edition of Excellence, themed "Sustaining Excellence, Inspiring Innovation", reflects the National Universities Commission's (NUC)'s ongoing commitment to strengthening our universities as engines of national growth and transformation.

The launch of the Africa Centres of Excellence (ACE) Alliance and the Compendium of Achievements and Impacts of the ACE Project in Nigeria stands as a powerful testimony to what strategic investment, regional cooperation, and visionary leadership can achieve. It embodies a decade of impact - in research, innovation, and capacity building - that has positioned Nigerian universities at the forefront of Africa's higher education reform.

Across the stories in this edition, you will find evidence of a system in motion: the Blueprint-ICT-Dev Project propelling universities into a new era of digital transformation; the SPESSE Project redefining professionalism and governance through world-class certification; the NgREN's deployment of identity federation and Eduroam connecting campuses to global networks; and the various Centres of Excellence driving research in food safety, climate resilience, sustainable procurement,

renewable energy, public and maternal health, biotechnology, water resource management, artificial intelligence, and advanced materials science, among others. These initiatives reflect a shared vision - to build a smarter, greener, and more competitive university system, aligned with Nigeria's development priorities and the global knowledge economy.

As the NUC continues to guide the system towards excellence, we reaffirm our commitment to reform, innovation, and internationalisation. The transformation we are witnessing today is not by chance; it is the product of deliberate effort, strategic partnerships, and a collective resolve to make our universities the pride of the continent.

*Indeed, excellence has been redefined, and the journey continues.*

**Professor Abdullahi Yusufu Ribadu,**  
FCVSN

*Executive Secretary, National Universities  
Commission*



## FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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# *Driving Innovation Across Higher Education*



*As we turn the pages of this edition of Excellence Magazine, with the themed Sustaining Excellence, Inspiring Innovation, we reflect on the remarkable momentum transforming Nigeria's higher education landscape. This edition captures not only what has been achieved but also the renewed*

*commitment to shaping a future where knowledge, innovation, and sustainability define our national development agenda.*

The launch of the ACE Alliance and the unveiling of the Compendium of Achievements and Impacts of the Africa Centres of Excellence Project in Nigeria mark a defining moment in our collective journey. What began as a regional initiative to strengthen postgraduate training and applied research has evolved into

a vibrant ecosystem of innovation, one that is connecting ideas to industries and knowledge to national development priorities.

Over the past decade, the Africa Centres of Excellence (ACEs) in Nigeria have demonstrated what strategic collaboration can achieve: cutting-edge research in health, agriculture, the environment, and governance; international partnerships that expand learning opportunities; and innovations addressing real-world challenges. Through the ACE Alliance, these gains are being consolidated, ensuring that our Centres remain sustainable, visible, and globally competitive long after project funding cycles end.

This edition also highlights initiatives that complement the ACE vision, from the Blueprint-ICT-Dev Project advancing digitalisation across campuses, to the SPESSE Project's professionalisation of governance and procurement, and the NgREN's bold strides in connectivity and identity federation. Together, these efforts reinforce a single message: Nigeria's universities are not standing still; they are innovating, adapting, and leading.

As Project Coordinator, I am deeply grateful to the Ministry of Education and our partners: the World Bank, the Agence

Française de Développement (AFD), the Association of African Universities (AAU), and our host universities, for their steadfast support and shared vision. I also commend the dedication of the Centre Leaders, researchers, students, and project teams whose passion continues to drive excellence across the system.

The journey of transformation is far from over. With the ACE Alliance now established, we have laid the foundation for a future where Nigerian universities do not merely follow global trends but set them.

*Let us, therefore,  
continue to build, with  
purpose, with vision,  
and with excellence.*

Warm regards,

**Dr Joshua Atah**  
*Coordinator, Special Projects*

# EDITOR'S NOTE

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## *Redefining Excellence, One Innovation at a Time*



Dear Readers,

In this edition of Excellence Magazine, we celebrate a defining moment in Nigeria's higher education transformation, one driven by vision, collaboration, and innovation.

At the heart of this edition is the launch of the Africa Centres of Excellence (ACE) Alliance and the unveiling of the ACE Compendium, two milestones that capture a decade of achievement and signal the dawn of a new era for research, innovation, and global engagement in Nigerian universities.

From improving ICT infrastructure in our universities and building smarter, digitally connected campuses, to redefining professionalism and sustainability in governance, this edition showcases the breadth of progress across our higher education landscape. We also spotlight remarkable strides in maternal health, food safety and bioinformatics, environmental certification, digital transformation, and

international collaboration; all evidence of a system steadily reinventing itself for relevance and impact.

Each story in these pages reflects the same message: excellence in higher education is not static. It evolves through ideas, partnerships, and the unrelenting pursuit of knowledge that serves society.

As you turn these pages, may you be inspired by the ingenuity, resilience, and purpose that define Nigeria's Centres of Excellence today and the brighter, smarter, more sustainable future they are building for tomorrow.

**Yvonne Orekyeh**

Editor, Excellence Magazine

A - ACE

S - SPESSE

N - NgREN

B - Blueprint-  
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# FORGING THE FUTURE: MINISTER LAUNCHES ACE ALLIANCE TO DRIVE EXCELLENCE, INNOVATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

*By Yvonne Orekyeh*



*The Honourable Minister of Education, Dr Maruf Tunji Alausa, CON, unveiling the Compendium on Key Achievements and Impacts of the ACE Project in Nigeria with the present and some past Executive Secretaries of the NUC, representatives of the Ministry of Finance, World Bank, AFD, AAU, some ACE host universities and other critical stakeholders of the ACE Project, in NUC*

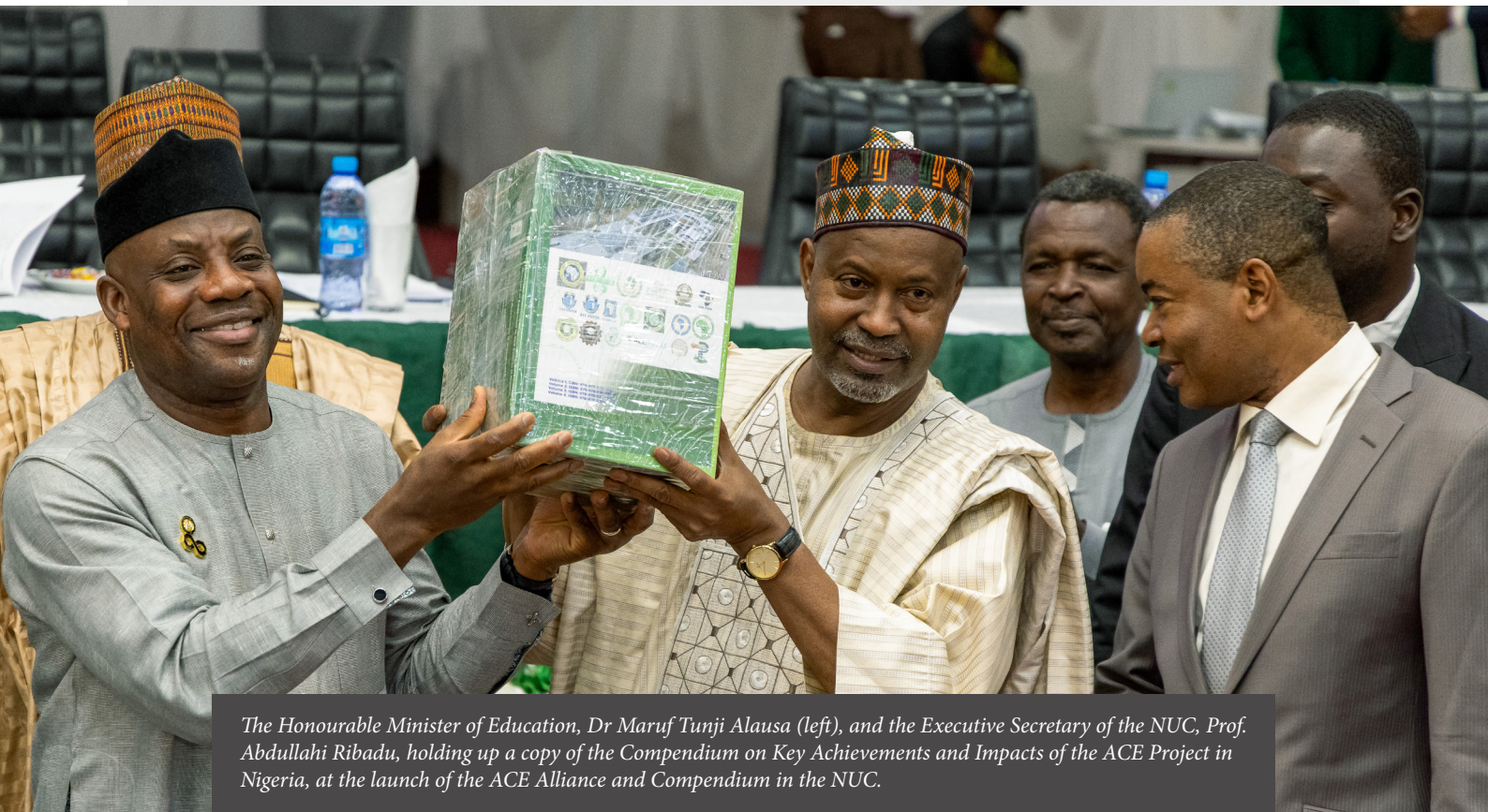


Nigeria's higher education system has entered a new phase of collaboration and global competitiveness with the official launch of the Africa Centres of Excellence (ACE) Alliance and the unveiling of the Compendium of Key Achievements and Impacts of the ACE Project in Nigeria by the Honourable Minister of Education, Dr Maruf Tunji Alausa, *CON*. The landmark event, which took place at the National Universities Commission (NUC) Secretariat in Abuja, celebrated a

decade of transformative investment in research, innovation, and capacity-building, uniting 20 Centres of Excellence under one platform to deepen synergy, sustain excellence, and position Nigeria as a regional leader in higher education and knowledge-driven development.

Speaking during the launch, Dr Alausa stated that beyond celebrating milestones, the ACE Alliance is a commitment to excellence, innovation, and global competitiveness in higher education. He

further described it as a *“strategic platform for synergy, shared learning, and collaboration which would enhance visibility and amplify the voices of the Centres of Excellence on the global stage”*.



The Honourable Minister of Education, Dr Maruf Tunji Alausa (left), and the Executive Secretary of the NUC, Prof. Abdullahi Ribadu, holding up a copy of the Compendium on Key Achievements and Impacts of the ACE Project in Nigeria, at the launch of the ACE Alliance and Compendium in the NUC.



The representative of the Federal Ministry of Education, Mr George Stanley Nyeso, at the launch of the ACE Alliance and the Compendium on Key Achievements and Impacts of the ACE Project in Nigeria, which took place in the NUC.

The Honourable Minister stated that the ACE Project, which is supported by the World Bank and co-funded by the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) in the recently concluded ACE Impact phase, aligns seamlessly with President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda, which prioritises education as the bedrock of national development. He noted that the project had not only strengthened Nigeria's position as a leader in higher education in Africa but also demonstrated how strategic partnerships can

drive sustainable growth. *“By fostering excellence in research, teaching, and innovation, the ACEs are helping to shape the skilled workforce and knowledge base our*

*nation needs to compete in a dynamic global economy”, he said.*

Acknowledging the many achievements of the ACE Project, the Minister emphasised its contribution to the internationalisation of education. He stated that, by attracting students and faculty from across Africa and fostering cross-border knowledge exchange, the ACEs had positioned Nigeria as a regional hub for excellence, as well as a provider of high-quality transnational education, rather than just a consumer. This, he said, aligns with the government's agenda to integrate Nigeria into global education data systems, ensuring that the nation's institutions are recognised and ranked among the best worldwide. To remain competitive, however, the Honourable Minister cautioned that the Nigerian





*Representative of the World Bank, and Practice Manager, Education, West and Central Africa, Ms Scherezad Latif, during the event, which took place in NUC, Abuja*

University System (NUS) must continue to be benchmarked against global standards, leveraging robust data to guide policy, planning, and performance improvement.

Representing the Federal Ministry of Finance, the Director of the International Economic Relations Department, Mr George Stanley Nyeso, noted that the Ministry, as borrower on behalf of the federal government, views the ACE Project as a strategic investment in human capital and intellectual infrastructure; one that has yielded visible returns through modern laboratories, global accreditations, and the training of hundreds of postgraduate students

across the region. He commended the NUC and the Centres for delivering measurable impact and accountability, adding that, for the Ministry of Finance, the ACE Alliance represents an opportunity for the ACEs to achieve financial autonomy and seamless collaboration and for Nigeria to assume a leadership role within the region.

Welcoming guests to the event, the Executive Secretary of the NUC, Professor Abdullahi Yusufu Ribadu, FCVSN, described the launch as “a vision fulfilled”; a vision of African universities rising to global standards of excellence, relevance, and impact. Over the past decade, he said, the ACE

Project had empowered 17 Nigerian universities hosting 20 Centres of Excellence to deliver high-quality postgraduate training, cutting-edge research, and solution-oriented partnerships in areas that matter most not only to national but also regional development, such as health, agriculture, education, engineering, ICT, and the environment.

From building and equipping modern laboratories and conducting world-class research, to producing thousands of master’s and doctoral graduates, the Executive Secretary said that the ACEs had proven that with the right support, Nigerian universities could be globally competitive and



Representative of the Agence Française de Développement, and Deputy Country Director, Mr Mahamadou Diarra, during the launch of the ACE Alliance and the Compendium in NUC, Abuja

are capable of producing innovations that respond to local challenges while contributing to global knowledge.

Professor Ribadu said that the Centres had also succeeded in strengthening linkages between research and industry, resulting in patents, policy innovations, and market-ready solutions, and they secured millions of dollars in competitive research grants from both public and private sources. Each Centre, according to him, tells a story of possibility, redefining excellence in the Nigerian higher education ecosystem. Introducing the four-volume compendium, which highlights the key achievements and impact of

the Centres of Excellence, documents publications by the ACE researchers, provides details of scholars across the various project thematic areas and catalogues the state-of-the-art facilities in all the Centres, the Executive Secretary described it as

*“a living archive of research, innovation, and leadership which captures the collective spirit of collaboration that has defined the ACE journey”.*

With the extraordinary successes recorded on the ACE Project, Professor Ribadu expressed confidence that its closure would not signify an end, but a transition into sustainability.

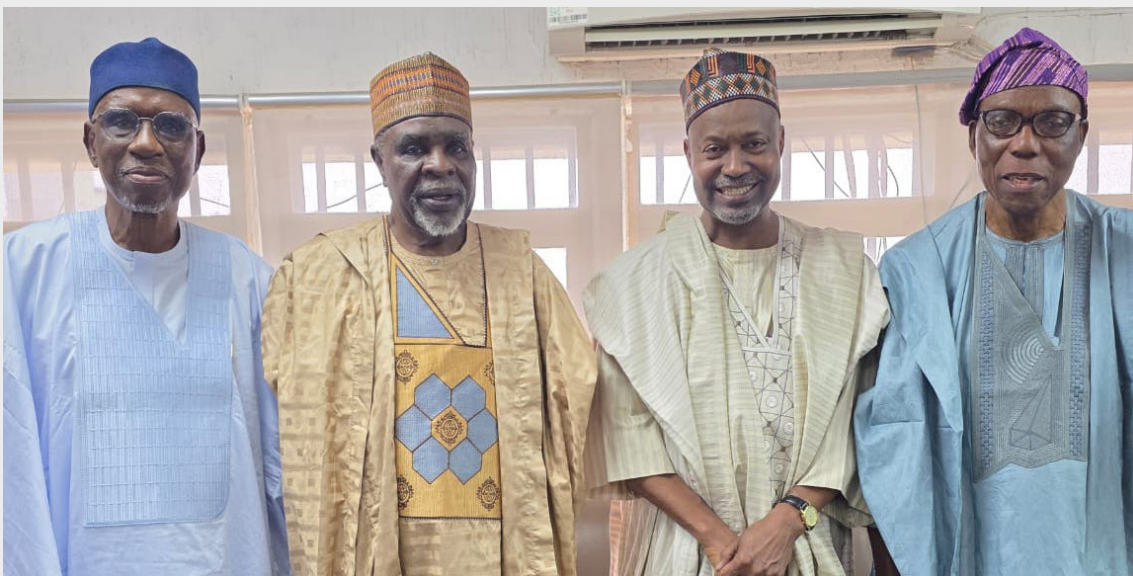
Presenting an overview of the ACE Project in Nigeria, the National Project Coordinator, Dr Joshua Atah, highlighted the transformative achievements of the Centres over the past decade, describing them as powerful engines of innovation, research, and human capital development. He noted that Nigeria's 20 ACEs have collectively attracted over \$145 million in performance-based

disbursements and mobilised additional resources exceeding \$3.9 billion, \$46 million, €1.78 million, and £2.6 million from various partners, investments that have been reinvested in infrastructure, cutting-edge research, and capacity building. More than 45,000 students have benefited from degree and professional programmes, including participants from over 15 African countries, strengthening regional academic collaboration and positioning Nigerian universities as continental leaders in postgraduate education.

Dr Atah further disclosed that the Centres have produced over 6,600 graduates, including 1,596 PhD holders, and generated more than 4,200 peer-reviewed publications in leading journals. Through over 625 national and international partnerships, the ACEs have bridged the gap between academia and industry, translating research into practical solutions. Beyond these numbers, he said, the Centres' impact has been evident in their

real-world contributions, such as the designation of two Nigerian ACEs as World Health Organization (WHO) COVID-19 testing laboratories, and innovations spanning renewable energy, reproductive health, food safety, and digital learning. These achievements, he said, have firmly established Nigeria's ACEs as a continental model for excellence-driven, solution-oriented higher education.

Representative of the World Bank Country Director and Practice Manager for Education in West and Central Africa, Ms Scherezad Latif, commended Nigeria's leadership in advancing higher education through the ACE Project, describing the launch of the ACE Alliance as "a bold and visionary step toward sustainability and regional development". She noted that with World Bank and AFD support, the 20 Nigerian ACEs Centres had recorded major milestones which go beyond numbers to represent lives improved, communities strengthened, and knowledge translated into solutions for Africa's development.



*Executive Secretary of the NUC, Prof. Ribadu (2nd right), with former Executive Secretaries of the NUC, Professors Abubakar Rasheed (left), Munzali Jibril (second left), and Julius Okojie (right)*





*A cross-section of Centre Leaders and Vice-Chancellors, during the launch of the ACE Alliance and the Compendium in Abuja*

Ms Latif highlighted the lessons learned in institutional support, innovation, and industry collaboration, which have shaped the proposed ACE Innovate Project, and urged governments, universities, and the ACE Alliance to sustain partnerships that equip youth with advanced skills, drive job creation, and position universities as engines of innovation for Africa's future.

Commending the NUC and the ACEs for their crucial role in strengthening Africa's research capacity, the AFD Country Director, who was represented by the Deputy Country Director, Mr Mahamadou Diarra, stated that the Centres of

Excellence had evolved into resilient, future-ready institutions and become key actors in areas such as energy, food security, health, and digital innovation. This, he said, aligned perfectly with AFD's commitment to the green transition, inclusive growth, and sustainable development. He called on the relevant stakeholders to ensure that the academic excellence achieved so far translates into tangible impact on employment and economic inclusion, and advocated for a strengthening of the universities' financial sustainability and governance to ensure that the benefits of the reforms extend beyond the centres.

Dignitaries at the event included three former Executive Secretaries of the NUC: Professor Munzali Jibril, Professor Julius Okojie, during whose tenure the ACE Project was birthed, and Professor Abubakar Adamu Rasheed, who ensured its continuity and midwived the transition to ACE Impact. Other guests included Vice-Chancellors of ACE host universities, Centre Leaders, and project teams.

*Prof Abraham Dogo of the Centre for Phytomedicine Research and Development, University of Jos, sharing insights on some of the Centre's products with the Honourable Minister of Education during the event, which took place in the NUC*



*A cross section of guests during the event, which took place in the NUC, Abuja*



*Centre Leader of Bayero University, Kano's Centre for Dryland Agriculture, Prof Sanusi Gaya, explaining some of the Centre's innovations to the Minister and the ES, NUC, during the tour of the exhibition booths*



*Centre Leader of Obafemi Awolowo University's ICT-Driven Knowledge Park, Prof. Sola Aderounmu (left), guiding the Minister of Education on a tour of the OAK-Park exhibition stand during the event*





# BUILDING SMARTER CAMPUSES: NUC, AFD UNVEIL €38 MILLION BLUEPRINT-ICT-DEV PROJECT

*By Yvonne Orekyeh*



*(l-r) Executive Secretary, NUC, Prof. Abdullahi Ribadu; Honourable Minister of Education, Dr Tunji Alausa; French Ambassador to Nigeria, Mr Marc Fonbaustier, NUC Coordinator, Special Projects, Dr Joshua Atah, former AFD Country Director, Mr Xavier Muron; former NUC Deputy Executive Secretary, Chris Maiyaki; and the representative of the Federal Ministry of Finance, Mr Umar Ibrahim El Turaj, during the unveiling of the Blueprint-ICT-Dev Project in NUC, Abuja*

As part of the ongoing push to deepen digital transformation across the Nigerian University System (NUS), the National Universities Commission (NUC) and the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) have launched the Blueprint-ICT-Dev Project, a landmark €38 million initiative designed to expand digital infrastructure and strengthen innovation in campuses across the NUS. Unveiled recently at the NUC Secretariat in Abuja, the Blueprint-ICT-Dev Project marks another major milestone in Nigeria's steady march toward a more connected, data-driven, and globally competitive higher education ecosystem.

Delivering his keynote address, the Honourable Minister of Education, Dr Maruf Tunji Alausa, *CON*, described the project as “a strategic investment in the future of Nigerian education”, noting that it aligns with President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Renewed Hope Agenda, which places education, digital innovation, and human capital development at the heart of national renewal.

“This project is not simply a technological upgrade,” Dr Alausa said. “It is about restoring hope to a sector that holds the key to Nigeria's renewal. Through the Blueprint-ICT-Dev Project, our universities can deepen digitisation, strengthen teacher training, expand open and distance learning, and deliver hybrid and cross-border programmes that make Nigerian universities globally competitive.”

The Minister further highlighted that the project would enhance data-driven policymaking, improve efficiency, and expand access to quality education. “When data flows, decision-making improves. When decision-making improves, impact follows”, he remarked.

In his welcome address, the Executive

Secretary of the NUC, Professor Abdullahi Yusufu Ribadu, reaffirmed the Commission's commitment to embedding digital transformation as the foundation of higher education reform in Nigeria.

“Our vision for the NUS is one where technology becomes the nervous system of our institutions”, he said. “ICT should no longer be a privilege of a few but the standard across all universities. This project is about reimagining ICT not as a support service, but as a strategic tool for teaching, research, and governance”.

According to Professor Ribadu, the first phase of the project will be implemented in 10 federal universities, selected through a merit-based process covering all six geopolitical zones. These universities are expected to pioneer the next stage of digital integration, serving as models for others to follow.

He also emphasised the importance of the Nigerian Research and Education Network (NgREN) as a shared platform that will enable universities to collaborate, share data, and drive system-wide innovation.

Providing insight into the project's design, the National Project Coordinator and NUC Coordinator, Special Projects, Dr Joshua Atah, explained that the initiative is a flagship component of the Blueprint for the Rapid Revitalisation of University Education in Nigeria, first conceived by the NUC in 2018.

The project comprises two key components:

- Component 1 (€38 million): Strengthening ICT infrastructure and digital capacity in 10 universities, improving connectivity, training, and pedagogical innovation.





*The Honourable Minister of Education, Dr Tunji Alausa, shaking hands with the French Ambassador to Nigeria, Mr Marc Fonbaustier, during the launch of the Blueprint-ICT-Dev Project in Abuja.*

- Component 2 (€2 million): Developing a National STEM Transformation Strategy and establishing a Labour Market Observatory (LMO) to align university curricula with job market needs.

*“The project is not about acquiring hardware and software alone”, Dr Atah said.*

*“It is about building resilient, data-driven universities that can thrive in the 21st-century knowledge ecosystem”.*

He added that a Project Implementation Committee (PIC) and a Project Implementation Unit (PIU) would be established within the NUC to ensure effective coordination, financial integrity, and accountability throughout the project’s lifecycle.

The French Ambassador to Nigeria, Mr Marc Fonbaustier, commended the initiative, describing it as “a decisive

leap forward in Nigeria’s journey toward inclusive, future-ready education”, He praised the NUC and the Ministry of Education for their leadership and vision, noting that the project’s impact will resonate across Africa’s higher education landscape.

Also speaking, Mr Xavier Muron, former AFD Country Director, reaffirmed the agency’s long-term partnership with Nigeria. “At AFD, we view digital transformation as a pillar for building future-ready societies”, he said. “Through this project, we are helping universities develop ICT-driven solutions that address academic and socio-economic challenges”.

The representative of the Federal Ministry of Finance, Mr Umar Ibrahim El Turaj, pledged continued support, describing the collaboration as “an investment in Nigeria’s knowledge economy and global competitiveness”.

The Blueprint-ICT-Dev Project aims to tackle long-standing gaps in digital infrastructure, administrative systems, and data management across the NUS. By expanding digital access, it seeks to create smarter campuses, empower smarter people,



and foster smarter ideas – key drivers of a 21st-century knowledge economy.

In a symbolic gesture, the Honourable Minister of Education presented letters of participation to Vice-Chancellors of the 10 selected universities, urging them to uphold transparency and sustainability.

With this launch, Nigeria's higher education system takes yet another significant stride toward a fully digitised, innovation-driven future, where universities not only teach and research but also lead digital transformation across Africa.

*“This initiative is a strategic investment in the future of Nigerian education. It is about building smart campuses, empowering smart people, and nurturing smart ideas”.*



Honourable Minister presenting a letter of participation to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Development) of Bayero University, Kano, Prof. Amina Mustapha, during the launch of the Blueprint-ICT-Dev Project in Abuja

# CDA STRENGTHENS FOOD SECURITY THROUGH TRAINING, IMPROVED SEED DISTRIBUTION IN 22 COMMUNITIES

*By Nura Garba*



*Centre Leader of Bayero University's Centre for Dryland Agriculture (CDA), Prof. Sanusi Gaya, with some members of the CDA Management and some of the farmers from the 22 adopted communities during the training which took place in Kano State*

In line with its mandate and to improve agricultural productivity and food security, the Centre for Dryland Agriculture (CDA) has conducted a comprehensive training programme and distributed improved seeds to farmers from 22 adopted communities in Kano State.

Addressing farmers and community leaders during the training programme,

which took place at the CDA Complex, Bayero University, Kano, the former Centre Director, Professor Jibrin Mohammed Jibrin, explained that the initiative is to train community representatives to foster a trickle-down effect beneficial to all community members.

Professor Jibrin urged the beneficiaries of the training programme to share the

knowledge gained with members of their respective communities to maximise its impact. He added that the CDA plans to continuously engage the communities, offer ongoing training on advanced farming techniques and collaborate to tackle agricultural challenges.

Following the training session, both foundation and certified seeds were





Former Centre Leader, CDA, Prof Jibrin M. Jibrin, (second left) distributing foundation and certified seeds to some of the farmers after the training

distributed to the farmers. The foundation seeds included varieties such as Samsorg 45, Samsorg 53, Chakti, Sosati, and Super Sosat. The certified seeds distributed were maize, rice, sorghum, and millet.

The farmers expressed profound appreciation for the gesture, noting that previous seed distributions had significantly improved their yields.

According to Adamu Mohammed from Yanoko Community, “Many farmers have inquired about the seeds provided by the CDA. We are extremely pleased with this new intervention, and the training has shown us the importance of proper seed care”.

Hajiya Hauwa from Doka Community praised the CDA for its support and training on best farming practices, stating,

*“Only God can reward the Centre for its contributions to our farming communities”.*

Sulaiman Shehu from Ginsawa Community noted a positive shift in their agricultural approach following the training. “As a community representative, I am confident that our farmers will greatly benefit from the techniques and methods taught regarding the use of foundation and certified seeds”, he said, thanking the CDA for its continued support.

CDA’s initiatives are poised to significantly enhance agricultural practices and productivity within these communities, reinforcing the Centre’s role in advancing food security and sustainable farming in the region.



# SPESSSE, A LEGACY FOR DEFINING THE FUTURE OF GOVERNANCE FOR SUSTAINABILITY, PROFESSIONALISM – SGF

By Yvonne Orekyeh



*Representative of the Secretary General of the Federation and Honourable Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Mr Adebayo Olawale Edun, test-running the NPCP, while the DG, BPP, Dr Adebawale Adedokun, the Head of Civil Service of the Federation, Mrs Didi Esther Walson-Jack, and other guests observe*

The Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), His Excellency, Senator George Akume, CON, has described the World Bank-supported Sustainable Procurement,

Environmental, and Social Standards Enhancement (SPESSSE) Project as a legacy for defining the future of governance for sustainability and professionalism in Nigeria. Senator Akume stated

this during the launch of the Nigeria Procurement Certification Programme (NPCP) at the Digital Resource Centre of the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) in Abuja.



*Honourable Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Mr Adebayo Olawale Edun and other dignitaries during the launch of the National Procurement Certification Portal (NPCP), which took place in Abuja*

In his keynote address, the SGF, who was represented by the Honourable Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Honourable Adebayo Olawale Edun, stated that SPESSE represents a strategic step by the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) towards institutionalising efficiency in procurement, environmental and social standards management. It also reflects the determination of the government to bridge the skills gap in these fields, energise the execution of capital projects and ensure the sustainability of reforms over the years.

The SGF described the NPCP as a visionary initiative of the Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP), which marks a significant milestone in Nigeria's efforts at transforming public sector governance and underscores the commitment of the government to the principles of transparency, accountability, and sustainable development across all sectors of the economy.

Recognising the significant role of an effective procurement system in

governance, he said the administration of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu had, in less than two years, introduced several high-impact procurement reforms, such as developing an e-procurement platform and publishing monthly records of contract awards. To enhance transparency and access, the government had also adopted e-advertisement of procurement processes. All these, he said, are a demonstration of the federal government's commitment to fiscal discipline, efficiency and inclusiveness.

He warned that any procurement officers who, through any act of commission or omission, were responsible for the loss of public funds or mis-procurement, would be held accountable for such losses, adding that public service is a trust which calls for utmost integrity.

In his remarks, the Honourable Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy said that SPESSE would ensure transparency, integrity, and accountability in government spending. He applauded the project's potential for





*(r-l) Executive Secretary of the NUC, Prof Abdullahi Ribadu, National Coordinator, SPESSE Project, Dr Joshua Atah, World Bank Task Team Lead on the SPESSE Project, Ishtiak Siddique and Procurement Specialist with the World Bank, Barbara Ziolkowska, discussing during the launch of the NPCP*

restoring and improving public confidence in government spending, revenue and operations.

Delivering a goodwill message, the Head of Civil Service of the Federation, Mrs Didi Esther Walson-Jack, *OOA*, strongly encouraged all procurement officers across ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) to actively enrol in and complete the procurement certification programme as an essential investment in personal competence and professional credibility. According to her, “In today’s increasingly complex procurement environment, certification is no longer optional, but fundamental”, adding that, to institutionalise the certification process, the OHCSF is currently reviewing the Public Service Rules (PSR) and related circulars. The Head of Service emphasised the need for sustained capacity development to maintain the standards

which SPESSE seeks to establish through the certification programmes. She stated that the launch of the NPCP provides the impetus to make procurement certification a mandatory requirement for officers involved in procurement in the service. This would ensure that only properly trained and certified officers are entrusted with managing public procurement processes.

Commending the BPP for its commitment to transparency, accountability, and professionalism in public procurement processes, the Executive Secretary of the National Universities Commission (NUC), Professor Abdullahi Yusufu Ribadu, stated that the launch of the NPCP represents a major leap in the digital transformation of capacity building in public procurement in Nigeria. He noted that the certification portal is a critical tool for achieving the goals of the procurement component of

the SPESSE project, which would enable BPP to facilitate seamless registration, training, tracking, and certification of learners, and ensure the delivery of high-quality training in procurement, which aligns with global best practices.

Professor Ribadu announced that the successes recorded on the project had resulted in conversations between the World Bank and the Federal Government of Nigeria regarding upscaling/extending the SPESSE Project and additional financing.

The NPCP was unveiled by the representative of the SGF and Honourable Minister of Finance, Mr Adebayo Olawale Edun, and was followed by a live activation of the platform.

The event was graced by dignitaries such as the Honourable Ministers of Education, Dr Maruf Tunji Alausa; Women Affairs, Mrs Imaan Sulaiman-Ibrahim; Information

and National Orientation, Alh. Mohammed Idris; and Youth Development, Mr Ayodele Olawande. It was attended by the Chairmen of the Senate and House Committees on Public Procurement, Senator Ipinsagba Olajide and Hon. Unyime Joshua Idem, and the former World Bank Acting Country Director for Nigeria, Taimur Samad, and the World Bank's SPESSE team, led by the Task Team Lead, Ishtiak Siddique. Other attendees included the Auditor-General of the Federation, Mr Shaakaa Kanyitor Chira, the Directors-General/Chief Executives of several MDAs and the Chairman Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Civil Service Commission, Engr Emeka M. Ezech.



Health care professionals and stakeholders during the dissemination workshop organised by ACEPHAP in collaboration with RCOG, SOGON and the Federal Ministry of Health

# ACEPHAP, AMERICAN HOSPITAL, OTHERS COLLABORATE ON ADVANCED MEDICAL TRAINING

*By Bala G. Abdullahi*

**I**n a significant stride toward improving maternal and neonatal healthcare in Nigeria, the Africa Centre of Excellence for Population Health and Policy (ACEPHAP) at Bayero University, Kano (BUK), has partnered with Boston Children's Hospital in the United States to conduct high-impact simulation training for healthcare providers. The intensive hands-on training was designed to strengthen the clinical competencies of medical residents by

immersing them in realistic, simulation-based obstetric scenarios.

According to the Director of ACEPHAP, Professor Hadiza Galadanci, the goal of the programme was to equip participants with critical, real-world skills for managing maternal health emergencies ranging from postpartum haemorrhage and pre-eclampsia to neonatal resuscitation and safe delivery protocols. "This training empowers our healthcare workers to make accurate, timely decisions

in obstetric emergencies. By engaging in realistic simulations, participants can practise emergency responses within a safe and controlled environment".

Beyond technical instruction, the training fostered crucial soft skills such as teamwork, communication, and confidence, all of which are essential for managing high-pressure situations in clinical settings. Professor Galadanci explained that the simulated scenarios encourage collaboration





*Dr John Varallo simulating a normal caesarean section using a high-fidelity mannequin, while the ACEPHAP Director, Prof Galadanci, observes*

among healthcare teams and help participants refine their response strategies without the risks associated with real-life emergencies. She emphasised that introducing advanced simulation-based learning methods is a transformative step toward reducing maternal and neonatal mortality in the region. “By building a more skilled and resilient healthcare workforce, we are bridging critical knowledge gaps and laying the foundation for sustainable improvements in our health systems.

In a bid to enhance the skills of gynaecologists, the Centre also collaborated with the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG), the Society of Gynaecology and Obstetrics of Nigeria (SOGON) and the Federal Ministry of Health to train medical experts.

The training, tagged ‘The Essential Gynaecological Skills (EGS) Manuals Dissemination’, was held recently in Abuja and was targeted at improving the capacity of gynaecologists to save more lives.

Professor Galadanci disclosed that the Centre had built a pool of expert trainers in states like Kano and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, using mannequins for hands-on procedures, such as manual vacuum aspiration and emergency care. During these sessions, the trainees showed significant knowledge gain, with pre- and post-test results proving the effectiveness of the model.

In his remarks, the Clinical Lead for the Global Health Workforce Programme and Course Director at RCOG UK, Dr





Sam Agwu, highlighted the initiative's collaborative strength. He admitted that the gathering of policymakers, medical professionals and technical specialists demonstrated their common dedication to enhancing the provision of healthcare for women and girls. He emphasised the need to prioritise providing frontline workers with high-quality, useful care tools.

As part of the commemoration of the 2025 Safe Motherhood Day, the ESG Manuals were formally launched. These were shared alongside other project outcomes with key stakeholders from five states: Lagos, Rivers, Enugu, Bauchi and Kaduna, and the FCT to promote adoption and facilitate scale-up.

In her address, the Director of the Centre for Global Women's Health at RCOG, Sarah Hall, expressed worry that gynaecological conditions in Nigeria had long been overlooked in policies, training, and funding. She also noted that obstetrics and maternal mortality have received a lot of the Centre's attention, while problems like infertility and persistent pelvic pain are still not given enough attention. "We hope that the training can be expanded countrywide because it equips non-specialist healthcare personnel with the necessary skills to close any observed gap".

During the project overview session, the President of SOGON, Professor Okechukwu Ikpeze, emphasised the importance of bolstering Nigeria's health workforce.

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*"This programme supports our broader goals of helping women realise their right to health, ensuring access to high-quality care, and reducing gender inequality", he said.*

While pointing out possible difficulties such as staff turnover from trained facilities, he recommended creating "a critical mass of trainers" as a workable remedy. "We now have a core workforce ready to lead implementation, with over 180 healthcare providers trained across multiple states", he said.

By the end of the training, stakeholders agreed on the importance of expanding the programme nationwide, embedding the new handbook into state health strategies, and securing political will to ensure its long-term use.

# DON'T MISS THE MOMENT:

## SPESSSE Certification and the Future of Your Career

*By Sufuyan Ojeifo*

In the life of any career, some moments define the road ahead. For Nigeria's procurement professionals, that moment has arrived with the Sustainable Procurement, Environmental and Social Standards Enhancement (SPESSSE) Project. Backed by the World Bank and led in the procurement component by the Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP), this is the biggest, most focused capacity-building initiative the procurement sector has ever seen.

To be clear, SPESSSE is not simply another training programme. It is a national reform engine with a very

personal impact. Civil servants who complete the certification will not only be better equipped to deliver value for money in public projects, but they will also gain access to a new and prestigious procurement cadre in the civil service.

An important point that must be stressed here is that only certified professionals will be eligible for promotion to this cadre. That means your career growth, your eligibility for higher responsibility, and your standing in the service could very soon depend on whether or not you hold this certification.

The question is not whether the certification will become

a requirement. That decision has already been made. The question is whether you will take the opportunity now, while the training is still free, or wait until it comes at a cost.

Once the free window closes, the same course that is now fully funded under the SPESSSE Project will require personal or agency budgets to access. Acting now means investing nothing but your time and attention to secure a certification that could define your professional future.

It goes without saying that this is also about performance. SPESSSE was designed to address critical



skills gaps identified in the procurement system as well as in environmental and social standards. A baseline survey found that over 70 per cent of procurement officers lacked competence in e-procurement tools. It was discovered that nearly half of all awarded contracts failed to meet competitive bidding requirements and that less than a fifth of MDAs carried out environmental impact assessments before awarding major contracts. SPESSE tackles these gaps head-on with curricula anchored on practical, real-world needs.

Training is delivered through six Centres of Excellence spread across the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria, to make them more accessible to potential students. These centres are domiciled in the University of Lagos, University of Benin, Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University (ATBU), Bauchi, Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University, Makurdi (JOSTUM), and the Federal University of Technology, Owerri (FUTO).

To make things easier for anyone who wishes to enrol, the programmes are built for flexibility. There are short courses for officers already in service, master's and bachelor's programmes in procurement, environmental and social standards for those who want to delve deeper, and executive programmes tailored for senior decision-makers. Modules cover contract management, using AI-driven simulations, environmental and social standards based on World Bank case

studies, and procurement data analytics with hands-on work in the National Open Contracting Portal.

For civil servants, the benefits of the procurement programme are immediate and long-term; immediate, because they will be better prepared to manage contracts, ensure compliance, and deliver transparent, accountable results. Long-term, because a certification becomes a passport to career advancement in a service that is raising the bar for professional standards.

SPESSE is not just about ticking a training box. It is about being part of a new culture in public procurement, one where competence is non-negotiable and excellence is rewarded. The reforms we talk about in meetings and read about in memos need people to carry them out. Those people must be trained, certified, and ready to perform. This is your chance to be one of them.

Registration is open. The training is free now, and the value is permanent. The choice is yours. Make the choice now.

# NgREN DEPLOYS IDENTITY FEDERATION, EDUROAM IN UNIVERSITIES

The Nigerian Research and Education Network (NgREN), under the auspices of the National Universities Commission (NUC), has successfully deployed and implemented the eduroam service at Bayero University, Kano (BUK), Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, Covenant University (CU), Ota, and the Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU), Ile-Ife.

Leading a team of experts, Chief ICT Officer with the NUC, Mr Oluwatobi Fowora, disclosed that this development aims to operationalise eduroam in Nigerian universities, enabling secure and seamless

wireless access for both academic staff and researchers, in line with NgRENID's identity federation goals. According to him, they were in the institutions to also assess and support the readiness of each university's institutional repository for integration with the Nigerian Research and Education Identity System (NIRIS), based on international standards and system compatibility.

He said the deployments were completed with high impact and strong institutional participation. Some of the activities carried out were initial site inspection of the universities' data centres, evaluation



*The NgREN team with the Vice-Chancellor of Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU), Ile-Ife, Prof. Simeon Bamire (fourth right), and other staff of the university's ICT department, during the visit to the institution*





*Vice-Chancellor, Covenant University, Ota, Prof. Timothy Anake (third left, front row) and some staff of the university with the NgREN team during the visit to Covenant University*

of internet connectivity and network architecture as well as configuration and deployment of eduroam infrastructure. Other activities were testing connectivity and authentication. Technical training for ICT and library staff on OpenLDAP as well as eduroam credential population and meetings with university library teams to assess current DSpace installations and federated repository-readiness.

Commending the NUC for its oversight roles on the NgREN since its inception, some of the Vice-Chancellors emphasised the need for extensive stakeholder engagement, particularly the involvement of the University Librarians Association in NgREN-related engagements. Other recommendations included the need to renegotiate subscription costs and the exclusion of already available services from

the NgREN bundle to reduce costs.

The team addressed concerns raised by some university librarians regarding the policy direction, sustainability, and governance structure of NgREN.

In a related development, staff members of the NgREN have completed an intensive Federated Identity training programme. The training, which was held virtually, was facilitated by GÉANT and the AfricaConnect3 Project, and co-funded by the European Union. Participants described the training as a major step towards the digital transformation of Nigeria's research and education sector. "As a strategic move for Nigeria's digital future, the training was specifically designed to equip NgREN staff with the knowledge and skills to deploy a national identity federation system and position





Nigeria to become an active participant in eduGAIN, a global inter-federation service that connects research and education institutions worldwide.

By implementing NgRENID identity federation and integrating with eduGAIN, academic institutions in Nigeria will benefit from secure and seamless access to global digital resources, enhanced cross-border academic collaboration, improved user management and digital identity assurance.

The programme featured renowned instructors who shared both technical expertise and practical experience. They included Mario Real from GEANT in

the Netherlands, who delivered strategic guidance on using identity federations to enhance research collaboration, and Marco Malavolti (GARR/IDEM, Italy), who provided technical deep dives on federation architecture, including SAML, Shibboleth, and OpenLDAP.



*Members of the SPESSCE-ABU management with some of the participants after the short course in Procurement, Environmental and Social Standards held at the Kano Centre*

# SPESSCE ABU STRENGTHENS CAPACITY ACROSS **NORTHERN NIGERIA**, CHAMPIONS TRANSPARENCY, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

*By Amina Ahmad Aminu*

**A**hmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria's Sustainable Procurement, Environmental and Social Standards Enhancement Centre of Excellence (SPESSCE-ABU) is setting new standards in professional capacity building across Nigeria's public sector. In a series of intensive training programmes held across northern Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory, the Centre has continued to equip professionals with the knowledge and tools to promote ethical governance, environmental responsibility, and social inclusion.

Most recently, SPESSCE-ABU hosted a specialised executive training programme on Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) for social safeguards officers of the Livestock Productivity and Resilience

Support (L-PRES) Project. The training brought together participants from 19 states and the FCT to deepen their understanding of conflict resolution and grievance handling in development projects.

Centre Leader, Professor Wisdom Japhet, stated that the SPESSE Project is a World Bank-supported initiative designed to build human capacity in procurement, environmental, and social standards. He reaffirmed that SPESSCE-ABU prioritises competence and proactive engagement over mere certification. "Proactiveness ahead of reactivity is our mantra", he said.

Deputy Centre Leader, Professor Hajara Shuaibu, led robust case analyses on real-world grievance scenarios, while other facilitators, including Professors Musa Idris,





A cross-section of participants during the short executive course in PES

C. K. Akpa, and Dr Hashim Muhammad Suleiman, guided participants through interactive sessions and practical conflict resolution exercises, including issues around farmer–herder relations.

The training sponsor, Mrs Maryam Adamu, underscored the importance of such engagements, noting that they create “avenues for professionals to exchange ideas and develop sustainable solutions to recurring challenges in project implementation”.

Beyond the GRM course, SPESSCE-ABU has extended its training footprint across Kano, Katsina, Jigawa, and Abuja, conducting short and advanced certificate courses that focus on procurement management, sustainable environmental studies, and social development. Participants from key sectors explored best practices in transparency, accountability, and eco-friendly governance.

Speaking at the Katsina training, Professor Japhet noted that SPESSCE-ABU’s outreach is

*“a movement toward building a more inclusive and accountable future”.*

The Centre’s Training Coordinator, Dr Abdullahi Muhammad, reaffirmed its commitment to professional development as a cornerstone for institutional and national progress.

In Jigawa, sessions emphasised social inclusion, gender equity, and community engagement, while the Abuja training delved into value-for-money principles and international procurement standards. Each engagement reinforced the Centre’s mandate to promote sustainable governance and strengthen public institutions.

Through these transformative interventions, SPESSCE-ABU continues to bridge skill gaps, foster transparency, and embed sustainability in Nigeria’s development landscape. As participants return to their posts across the country, the impact of these training programmes is expected to ripple across government agencies and communities, enhancing accountability, reducing conflict, and driving a more resilient and inclusive future for all.



Participants with the Director of CDA and Chairman of the LOC at the end of the conference

# 5TH INTERNATIONAL DRYLANDS CONFERENCE URGES PROTECTION, RESTORATION OF RANGELANDS

*By Nura Garba*

The 5th International Conference on Drylands, organised by the Centre for Dryland Agriculture (CDA), Bayero University, Kano, has concluded with a resounding call on governments, policymakers, and stakeholders at all levels to take decisive action to protect and restore the health of rangelands, safeguard the livelihoods of pastoralist communities, and enhance climate resilience in dryland regions.

Held from 6-8 May 2025 with the theme “Promoting Sustainability and Resilience of Rangelands: Present and Future Outlooks”, the three-day gathering brought together over 300 participants, including scientists, researchers, policymakers, development partners, and representatives of the private sector. Participants were from 11 African countries, 13 Nigerian states, 17 academic institutions, and several international





*CDA international graduate from Ethiopia, Dr Fenet Belay, making a presentation during the Conference.*

organisations, creating a rich platform for knowledge exchange, policy dialogue, and regional collaboration.

In a communiqué released at the end of the conference, participants urged governments to develop and implement comprehensive, participatory, and evidence-based legal frameworks that prioritise sustainable rangeland management. They emphasised the need for policies that recognise, protect, and support the traditional knowledge and practices of pastoralists, while ensuring equitable access to land and natural resources. Such policies, the communiqué noted, must include secure land tenure and fair resource governance to promote peaceful coexistence and prevent conflict over land use.

A key outcome of the conference was the recognition of the crucial role of women and youth, particularly those from pastoralist communities, in driving resilience and sustainability. Participants called for increased investment in building their capacities, ensuring their

active participation in decision-making processes, and supporting their access to income-generating opportunities and sustainable resource development projects.

The conference also stressed the importance of scaling up both public and private sector investments in climate change adaptation strategies, sustainable land management technologies, and diversified livelihood initiatives that can reduce the vulnerability of dryland populations. These investments, according to participants, must be complemented by demand-driven research and the promotion of innovations that integrate indigenous knowledge systems with modern scientific approaches to deliver context-specific, sustainable solutions.

In view of the interconnected nature of dryland challenges, the conference called on international development partners and organisations to align their resources with the outcomes of the conference and to enhance regional and global cooperation, particularly on



*A cross-section of international resource persons at the Conference*

transboundary issues. There was a strong push for deeper engagement with global initiatives such as the US-led Vision for Adapted Crops and Soils (VACS), launched on the margins of the 2023 United Nations General Assembly, as well as the Africa Soil Initiative and related programmes.

The private sector was encouraged to play a proactive role by identifying and investing in rangeland-based enterprises that not only ensure profitability but also contribute to ecological integrity and community well-being. These enterprises, participants noted, could help create shared value and stimulate sustainable development in dryland areas.

Conference participants made it clear that the alarming degradation of rangelands, the increasing threats to pastoralist livelihoods, and the growing fragility of dryland ecosystems demand more than discussion—they demand urgent, collaborative, and sustained action. They emphasised that the path to healthy rangelands is also the path to achieving food security, ecological balance, and peaceful coexistence.

In this regard, the conference underscored the importance of seizing the momentum of the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP) 2025 as a global platform to mobilise awareness, foster partnerships, and scale up collective efforts to secure a thriving future for rangelands in Nigeria, across Africa, and around the world.

The conference was supported by several key partners including the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (icipe) through the Regional Scholarship and Innovation Fund (RSIF), the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre (CIMMYT), the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Federal Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Livestock Development, and the Commonwealth Geographic Bureau (CGB).

Among its core objectives, the conference





Dignitaries, including the international resource persons, Chairman of the occasion, Prof Abubakar Rasheed (4th from right), Director, CDA and the CDA management team, after the opening ceremony

sought to share cutting-edge scientific and practical experiences in rangeland health and productivity, foster dialogue among key stakeholders, including policymakers, pastoralists, researchers, and civil society, and identify strategies for enhancing climate resilience, food security, and peace in dryland communities. It also aimed to strengthen partnerships that can drive regional research, capacity development, and policy influence across the dryland ecosystems of Africa.

## *...icipe Launches Agri-Food Systems and Climate Action Network*

Another significant point of the conference was the launch of the Agri-Food Systems and Climate Action Network as part of a side event organised by the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (icipe).

The network comprises six Centres of Excellence across sub-Saharan Africa, under the Second Africa Higher Education Centres of Excellence for Development Impact (ACE Impact) Project. They

include the Centre for Dryland Agriculture in Bayero University, Kano (Nigeria), Africa Centre of Excellence in Agri-Food Systems and Nutrition in Universidade Eduardo Mondlane (Mozambique), and Africa Centre of Excellence for Climate Smart Agriculture and Biodiversity Conservation (ACE Climate SABC) in Haramaya University (Ethiopia). Others are the Faculty of Agricultural Economics and Policy/Agribusiness domiciled in the University of Ghana (Ghana), Africa Centre of Excellence for Infectious Diseases of Human and Animals in Southern and Eastern Africa (SACIDS) in Sokoine University of Agriculture (Tanzania), and the Regional Centre for Crop Improvement (MaRCCI) in Makerere University (Uganda).

The network is supported by the Regional Scholarship and Innovation (RSIF), an initiative of the Partnership for Skills in Applied Sciences, Engineering and Technology (PASET). It will be implemented by icipe as the Regional Coordination Unit.

# SPESSSE CERTIFICATION: NIGERIA UNVEILS ESCS TO POWER EFFICIENCY, TRANSPARENCY, SUSTAINABILITY

By Yvonne Orekyeh



*The National Project Coordinator of the SPESSE Project, Dr Joshua Atah (middle), The Director Environment Assessment Department, Mrs Rofikat A. Odetoro (4th left), Project Coordinator Environment Node, Mr Shittu Hussain (5th left) and other members of the SPESSE Environment node team at the event*

Positioning the country for a more accountable and technology-driven future, the Federal Government has unveiled the Environmental Standards Certification Scheme (ESCS), a digital platform designed to enhance efficiency, transparency, and professionalism across both public and private sectors. Announcing the integration of the advanced learning management system, secure examination platform, and automated certification issuance system, the Honourable Minister of Environment,

His Excellency Balarabe Abbas Lawal, said the initiative would strengthen capacity and credibility nationwide. Represented by the Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Environment (FMEnv), Mr Mahmud Adam Kambari, the Minister explained that the Sustainable Procurement, Environmental and Social Standards Enhancement (SPESSE) Project, under which the ESCS was conceived, aims to equip professionals with the technical and ethical competence needed to meet global environmental and governance standards.



The Minister stated that the (SPESSE) Project was conceived to enhance capacity-building in procurement, environmental, and social standards, towards equipping professionals across all sectors with the necessary skills to meet international benchmarks. He noted that the ESCS goes beyond certification to strengthening Nigeria's institutional framework for environmental management. It also provides a strategic platform for continuous professional development and catalyses national and regional capacity-building.

The Honourable Minister said that the ESCS underscores FMEnv's unwavering commitment to strengthening environmental sustainability and ensuring compliance with global best practices. It was carefully designed as a "robust, structured certification system that will set a new standard for environmental governance in Nigeria". The scheme would also streamline access to self-paced training on the learning management system, including examinations and certifications, making professional development more accessible and transparent.

Launching the ESCS, the Honourable Minister noted that Nigeria was ushering in a new era of professionalism and accountability in environmental governance. He urged relevant stakeholders to embrace the scheme, actively participate in its implementation, and ensure that Nigeria remains at the forefront of sustainable environmental management in Africa.

Delivering a goodwill message, the National Coordinator of the (SPESSE) Project, and NUC Coordinator, Directorate

of Special Projects, Dr Joshua Atah, noted that the launch of ESCS marks a significant milestone in Nigeria's journey toward strengthening environmental governance and sustainability practices. Through innovative technology, the scheme symbolises a collective commitment to fostering excellence in environmental standards and capacity-building, he said.

Dr Atah expressed confidence that the ESCS would transform the process of accrediting individuals and organisations, equipping them with the requisite skills and knowledge to address environmental challenges efficiently and effectively. The scheme would also empower a new generation of professionals dedicated to promoting and safeguarding environmental practices in the public and private sectors.

The (SPESSE) National Coordinator called for the unwavering support of all stakeholders in charting a course toward a greener, more sustainable future for Nigeria and the world.

With the launch of this automated certification scheme, FMEnv has made giant strides towards contributing to the production of a critical mass of professionals who will drive the institutionalisation of merit, professionalism, and accountability, thereby laying a stronger foundation for improving governance, transparency, and sustainable development in Nigeria.

# ATBU-SPESSCE: BEYOND THE WORLD BANK FUNDING, WHAT NEXT?

*Interview conducted by Dr Andee Iheme*



*Aerial view of the SPESSE Centre of Excellence at ATBU, Bauchi*

As the world grapples with the challenges of climate change, environmental degradation, procurement, and social inequality, sustainability has become a critical consideration in development projects. In the context of a World Bank-sponsored project in a developing country's university, sustainability is not just a buzzword but a necessity. By integrating

sustainable practices and principles, such projects can ensure long-term impact.

When World Bank-sponsored projects in universities in developing countries align with sustainability and global procurement best practices, they can make a lasting impact, promote economic development, reduce the high level of corruption associated with

public procurement, and contribute to achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

At Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University (ATBU), Bauchi, the SPESSE Project is pursued with the future in view, recognising that the World Bank funding is not a permanent resource. Mindful of this, the Centre Leader, Professor Ibrahim



Hassan Garba, galvanised his project team into a mindset of achieving results in the present while focusing on future possibilities of innovation and sustainability.

This interview, conducted by the Communications Officer of the ATBU

SPESSE Centre of Excellence, Dr Andee Iheme, with Professor Garba, therefore, sheds light on the ATBU SPESSCE and how well the sustainability factor has been embedded in the project.

**Dr Iheme:** *The ATBU-SPESSCE Centre of Excellence plans to equip its research laboratories with state-of-the-art equipment to strengthen its research and innovation culture. Could you elaborate on how this investment in infrastructure will directly contribute to achieving sustainability within the Centre and its broader impact?*

**Prof. Garba:** Equipping our research laboratories with state-of-the-art equipment is a cornerstone of our sustainability strategy. Firstly, it directly enhances our capacity for conducting cutting-edge research and innovation in the SPESSE thematic areas, particularly the environmental node. This means that we can conduct more precise, efficient, and impactful studies, leading to solutions that address real-world sustainability challenges. Secondly, it ensures the establishment of a vibrant research ecosystem. In addition, high-quality research output can generate intellectual property, secure grants, and attract partnerships, creating a self-sustaining funding model for the Centre.

**Dr Iheme:** *Beyond just acquiring equipment, what specific strategies will the Centre implement to ensure the effective utilisation and long-term maintenance of this advanced laboratory equipment, aligning with a sustainable operational model?*

**Prof. Garba:** Effective utilisation and long-term maintenance are crucial for the sustainability of our equipment investment. We will implement several strategies, such as:

- *Training Programmes:* Comprehensive training will be provided to all relevant project staff on the proper operation and basic maintenance of the new equipment.
- *Maintenance Schedules:* Strict preventative maintenance schedules will be established and adhered to, in collaboration with equipment manufacturers and/or certified technicians.
- *Access Protocols:* Clear access protocols will be put in place to ensure equitable and efficient use by all researchers, thereby minimising downtime.



One of the centre's multipurpose auditoriums

**Dr Iheme:** *The introduction of PhD programmes in the three SPESSE thematic areas is a significant step. How do these new programmes contribute to the Centre's long-term sustainability, particularly in terms of human capital development and knowledge dissemination?*

**Prof. Garba:** The introduction of PhD programmes is pivotal to our long-term sustainability. Firstly, these programmes are designed to cultivate a new generation of highly skilled researchers and experts in the SPESSE thematic areas. This addresses the critical need for advanced human capital that can drive innovation and solve complex sustainability challenges. Secondly, PhD candidates will contribute significantly to our research activities, augmenting the Centre's intellectual capacity and strengthening our research pipeline. Thirdly,

as our PhD graduates enter academia, industry, or government, they will be ambassadors of the Centre's work and principles, disseminating knowledge and fostering sustainable practices across various sectors. This creates a legacy and expands our influence far beyond the Centre's physical location, ensuring a continuous flow of expertise and impact.

**Dr Iheme:** *What measures will be put in place to ensure the quality and relevance of these PhD programmes, so that graduates are well-equipped to contribute meaningfully to sustainability initiatives upon completion?*

**Prof. Garba:** Ensuring the quality and relevance of our PhD programmes is paramount. Our planned measures include:





- *Regular Review:* The programmes will undergo regular internal and external quality assurance to ensure continuous improvement and responsiveness to evolving sustainability landscapes.

***Dr Iheme:** Housing the project in a dedicated facility, complete with project staff offices, lecture theatres, laboratories, and classrooms, is a substantial investment by the World Bank. How does this dedicated infrastructure contribute to the overall sustainability and operational efficiency of the ATBU SPESSE Centre of Excellence?*

- *Strong and Dedicated Supervisory System:* A robust supervisory system will be in place, with supervisors who are active researchers in the three thematic areas and committed to student mentorship.
- *Interdisciplinary Approach:* Where relevant, we will encourage interdisciplinary research to reflect the complex nature of sustainability challenges.
- *Practical Engagement:* Students will be encouraged and supported to engage in practical, real-world projects, internships, and collaborations with industry or governmental bodies.
- *Research Ethics and Integrity:* Strong emphasis will be placed on research ethics and integrity, ensuring responsible and impactful research.

**Prof. Garba:** A dedicated facility is critical for the long-term sustainability and operational efficiency of the Centre. It provides a centralised and conducive environment for all our activities – research, teaching, and project administration. This fosters synergy and collaboration among staff, researchers, and students, which is essential for innovation. It also enhances our institutional identity and visibility, making the Centre a recognisable hub for excellence in the SPESSE thematic areas. This aids in attracting partnerships, funding, and top talent. Having dedicated, purpose-built laboratories and classrooms also ensures optimal learning and research conditions, which directly impact the quality of our output. The facility enhances our brand, which projects our reputation as a credible Centre of Excellence. Finally, it enables efficient resource allocation and management, as all core functions are consolidated under one roof, minimising logistical complexities and contributing to overall operational efficiency.

# ACEMFS BREAKS NEW GROUND IN FOOD SAFETY, BIOINFORMATICS, PUSHES FRONTIERS IN RESEARCH, INNOVATION...

*By Lydia Legbo*



*Vice-Chancellor, FUTMinna, Prof. Faruk A. Kuta, inaugurates the Bioinformatics Lab as the management staff of ACEMFS hold the ribbon*

At the Federal University of Technology, Minna (FUTMinna), the Africa Centre of Excellence for Mycotoxin and Food Safety (ACEMFS) continues to shape the conversation around food safety, environmental sustainability, and public health. Through groundbreaking research and new infrastructure, the Centre is positioning itself as a powerhouse for scientific innovation in West Africa.

At the recently concluded PhD exit seminar and MTech internal defence held at the ACEMFS Complex, the Centre's postgraduate students presented findings that shed light on some of the most pressing threats to public health and food systems across the region.

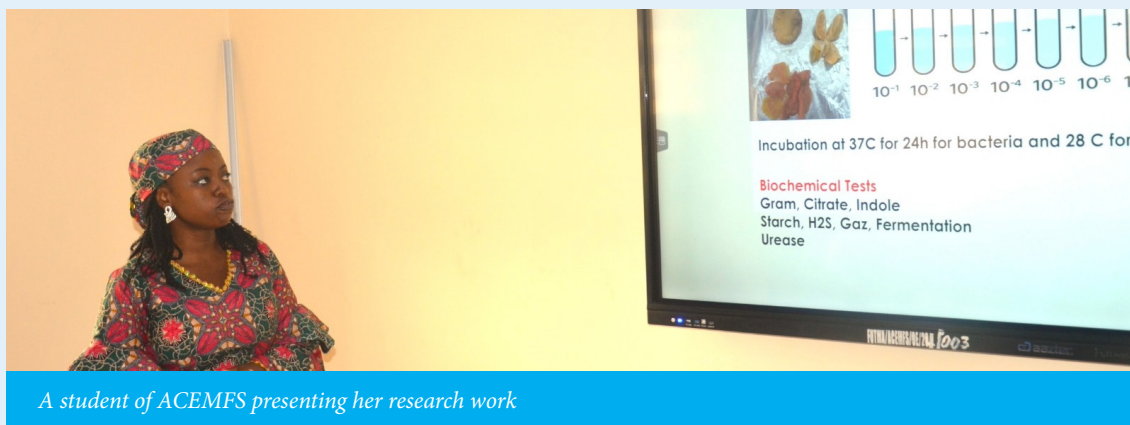
One such study, led by PhD candidate Ilunga Ciuma Kakasu Calvin, examined mycotoxin contamination in groundnuts

marketed in Kinshasa and Minna. His findings revealed contamination levels surpassing international safety limits; an alarming discovery that underscores the need for stronger food monitoring systems and biocontrol measures to protect consumers and trade integrity.

Another scholar, Muhammad Asabe Hajara, delved into the molecular detection of virulence genes and antibiotic resistance in *Listeria monocytogenes* found in ready-to-eat foods in Abuja. Her work revealed widespread contamination, raising concerns for vulnerable populations and emphasising the urgency of improved food hygiene and surveillance.

Similarly, Muhammad Sakinatu Ndagiman explored pesticide residues in edible vegetables across Niger State. Her findings pointed to unsafe pesticide handling





A student of ACEMFS presenting her research work

practices by farmers and weak regulation. Bwami Linus Stephen went further to investigate methods for the bioremediation of atrazine herbicide residues on farmlands within FUTMinna.

Other presentations demonstrated ACEMFS's multidisciplinary reach. Sadic Akanchaliwari Majeed unveiled nano-adsorbent composites derived from microalgae for treating fishpond wastewater, an eco-friendly innovation for aquaculture. Aliyu David Femi examined antimicrobial resistance genes in bacteria from diabetic patients, revealing the growing threat of drug resistance. Meanwhile, Galadima Grace introduced a promising bio-preservation technique for fruits using bacteriocins produced by *Lactobacillus* spp., offering a natural alternative to chemical preservatives.

The seminar, moderated by Dr Hadiza Kudu Muhammad of the Biochemistry Department, showcased how ACEMFS is bridging research technology, and policy to safeguard health and the environment.

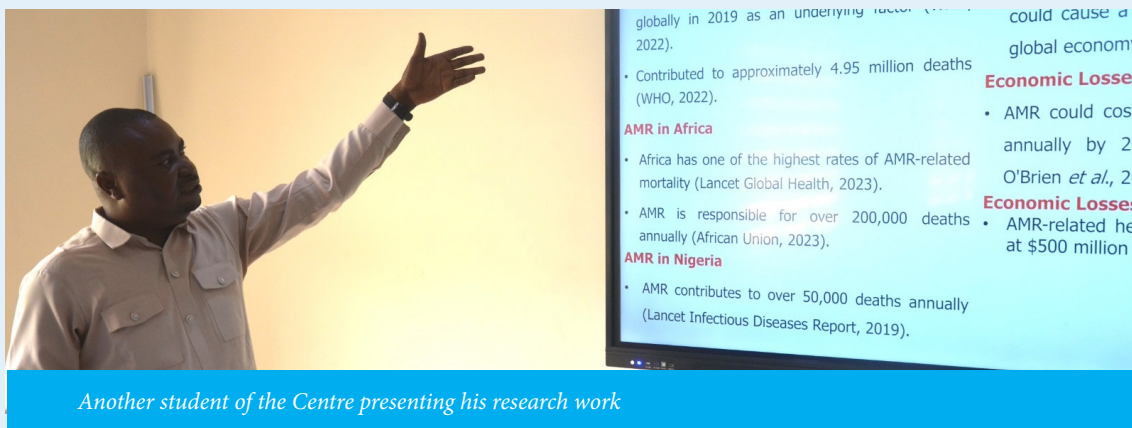
## ...Commissions Bioinformatics Laboratory

In a landmark development, the Centre also celebrated the commissioning of its Bioinformatics Laboratory, a cutting-edge facility designed for advanced genetic and molecular analyses. The lab was formally commissioned by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Faruk Adamu Kuta, who described it as a “breakthrough in life sciences research”.

Professor Kuta expressed pride that FUTMinna now hosts one of only three bioinformatics laboratories in Nigerian universities, alongside the renowned Africa Centre of Excellence for Genomics of Infectious Diseases (ACEGID) at Redeemer's University, Ede, and the Covenant Applied Informatics Communication – Africa Centre of Excellence (CApIC-ACE) hosted by Covenant University, Ota.

Recalling the pivotal role ACEGID played in sequencing the full genome of the SARS-CoV-2 virus (which causes the Coronavirus Disease) from Nigeria's index case, the Vice-Chancellor noted that FUTMinna's new facility would similarly empower local researchers to make global contributions.

“This new lab places FUTMinna on the world map of bioinformatics research. It strengthens our capacity for innovation



and aligns perfectly with our vision for a future medical college”, he said, expressing gratitude to the World Bank for its sponsorship and to ACEMFS’s management for their foresight.

The commissioning also marked the start of an intensive bioinformatics training session for staff and students, facilitated by experts from CAPIC-ACE. The training team included Dr Itunuoluwa Isewon, Emmanuel Alagbe, Dorcas Omonigbehin, Emmanuella Ekuri Matumamboh, and Temitayo.

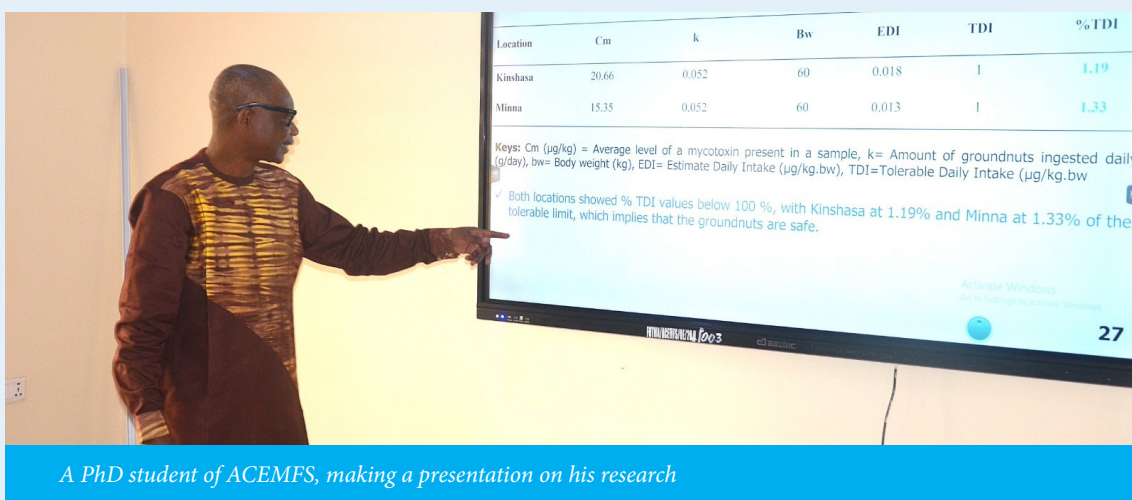
Representing the Centre Leader, Professor Anthony Hussaini Makun, the Deputy Centre Leader, Professor Hadiza Lami Mohammed, described the new lab as a long-awaited dream come true.

“Bioinformatics integrates computation,

statistics, and mathematics to make sense of complex data. It is the ultimate stage of molecular research, where results from wet labs meet the power of data analytics. With this facility, our students no longer need to travel elsewhere to access such resources”, she said.

Fully equipped with high-performance laptops, desktops, servers, and specialised software, the laboratory will support interdisciplinary research across agriculture, engineering, life sciences, and medicine, cementing ACEMFS’s role as a national leader in applied bioscience innovation.

As the seminar and commissioning came to a close, one thing was clear: ACEMFS is not just producing research; it is nurturing solutions that protect lives, sustain the environment, and secure the continent’s future in science and technology.





# IPESS-JOSTUM, BREAKING NEW GROUNDS

*By Uche Aondohemba*



*Postgraduate students of IPESS and their counterparts from Ghana during an exchange programme at GIMPA, Accra, Ghana*

Dedicated to developing sustainable human capacity in the areas of procurement, environmental, and social standards, the impact of the Sustainable Procurement, Environmental, and Social Standards Enhancement (SPESSE) Project cannot be overstated. SPESSE is a remarkable initiative by the Federal Government of Nigeria, the World Bank and the National Universities Commission (NUC) in engineering

positive change and growth in various spheres of life.

As the hub for sustainable human capacity development in North Central Nigeria, the Institute of Procurement, Environmental and Social Standards (IPESS), Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University, Makurdi (JOSTUM), has been spearheading initiatives to enhance human capacity development through a variety of programmes. The institute has empowered



*IPESS FUAM Advanced Certificate Course participants during an industrial visit to Benue State Water Board, Makurdi*

individuals with the necessary skills, knowledge, and opportunities by providing access to educational resources, training programmes, mentorship, and professional development opportunities.

IPESS-JOSTUM aims to nurture a workforce that is not only competent but also adaptable and

resilient in the face of an evolving society. As a pillar of excellence in human capacity development, the Centre has achieved remarkable milestones in recent months in tandem with the mission and vision of the entire SPESSE project.

One of the standout achievements of IPESS-JOSTUM in recent times

is the successful graduation of over 1000 trainees through customised training programmes in Jos, Plateau State, Lafia and Keffi, Nasarawa State, and in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

Recognising the importance of continuous learning and skills development, IPESS organised customised short-course training programmes



for staff members of various Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) of various government institutions. These targeted training sessions were meticulously designed to address specific skill gaps, enhance job performance, and instil a culture of innovation and efficiency within the public sector. This is in addition to the over 2,000 candidates trained by the institute through the online delivery mode since the beginning of 2025.

The overwhelming testimonies of participants indicate that, apart from the advancement in moral principles and industry best practices in their workplaces, IPESS-JOSTUM's programmes have advanced participants' professional growth and opened doors to new career opportunities.

A trainee, Ijeoma Gift Onyinye-Mbamalu, describes the training programmes offered by IPESS-JOSTUM as “career-shaping experiences” and encourages more professionals to seize the opportunity to invest in themselves and join the transformative journey. “For many of us, this experience has opened our eyes to new possibilities, and I trust we’ll meet again in future learning spaces”.

By engaging with employees at different levels of government, the institute continues to demonstrate its dedication to building capacity and driving positive change in governance and public service delivery.

Taking conscious steps to sharpen leadership skills, promote effective decision-making, enhance strategic planning abilities

and keep the university community updated with the progress made at the institute, a leadership bootcamp and information disclosure retreat was organised for Principal Officers, Deans, and Directors in JOSTUM. This was done, recognising that in an increasingly interconnected world, information has become one of the most valuable assets for individuals, businesses, and governments. The bootcamp/retreat equipped the participants with the necessary tools to lead with confidence and a clear vision. It also played a crucial role in establishing a culture of transparency and strategic foresight within JOSTUM, ensuring sustainable growth and effective leadership practices.

Again, in a move towards fostering international collaboration and cultural exchange, IPESS-JOSTUM facilitated an exchange training programme for 14 postgraduate students held at the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) in Accra, Ghana. The exchange programme, which was conducted in two batches of six and eight candidates, offered a unique opportunity to engage in a global dialogue which positively impacted the students' academic and cultural awareness, thereby enhancing their overall educational experience.

One of the participants, Dr Omale Paul Abuh of the Procurement Standards node, stated that the training was an enriching experience that enhanced his overall capacity in the field of procurement. According to him, the training, which



*A cross-section of participants during a valedictory session in Abuja*

was organised by the World Bank in collaboration with GIMPA, was indeed an eye-opener and immensely impactful. “It allowed me to gain invaluable knowledge and insight into sustainable procurement practices, especially in public procurement. This will enhance my professional capacity and contribution to procurement reforms and sustainable development goals.” Beyond academic and technical learning, he said, the programme also provided a platform to build lifetime professional networks and foster collaboration with colleagues from across African countries who were in attendance.

Another participant, Grateful Oyahre Itodo, noted, “The student exchange programme was an enriching opportunity that exposed me to diverse perspectives in governance, policy analysis, and public sector management. I particularly appreciated the engaging lectures on procurement management, social development, and environmental sustainability, which broadened my understanding of development practices across Africa, especially sustainable

practices in Ghana”.

In line with the provisions of the SPESSE Project, and as part of a quality assurance mechanism, IPESS-JOSTUM underwent the sixth verification exercise conducted by the Project’s Independent Third-Party Verifier (ITPV) to assess the institute’s compliance with Project guidelines. The exercise evaluated the institute’s performance and milestones to identify areas for improvement. The seamlessness of the verification exercise at IPESS-JOSTUM elicited the commendation of the ITPV team lead, who praised the institute’s commitment and resilience towards the actualisation of the project’s goals. This further demonstrates the institute’s resolve to stay ahead of the curve and continue to deliver top-notch training to its clients.

To date, IPESS-JOSTUM has successfully trained and issued certificates to thousands of participants. Latest statistics reveal that the total number of short-course (Track A) trainees in procurement, environmental and social standards stands at 6,976, 4,862 and 4,538, respectively. For the Advanced





*Social Standards graduates after a short course in Abuja*

Certificate course (Track B), the institute has trained 653 candidates in Procurement, 459 in Environmental Standards, and 464 in Social Standards, while 45, 21, and 38 candidates completed postgraduate programmes (comprising master's and postgraduate diplomas) in Procurement, Environmental and Social Standards, respectively.

Ultimately, IPESS-JOSTUM has made remarkable strides in sustainable human

capacity development through its strategic initiatives, which aim to nurture talent, foster collaboration, and drive positive change. As the institute continues on its path of growth and development, its unwavering dedication to sustainable human capacity development serves as a beacon of inspiration for all stakeholders who are committed to advancing human potential and excellence.



*Prof Rufus Sha'Ato (left) handing a certificate of participation to a graduate after a short course in Abuja*

# *Africa Celebrates*

# ACE @ 10

## *Nigeria Chairs Final PSC*



*A cross section of country representatives and focal points during the PSC meeting which took place at the Labadi Beach Hotel in Accra, Ghana*

Over 500 dignitaries and scholars from across Africa, Europe, and the Americas gathered at Labadi Beach Hotel in Accra, Ghana, from 7-9 April 2025 to celebrate ten years of groundbreaking growth, achievements, and the impact of the Africa Centres of Excellence (ACE) Project across sub-Saharan Africa (SSA).

Representing the Federal Republic of Nigeria and chairing the final meeting of the ACE Project Steering Committee (PSC), which comprises governments representatives and focal points of all

participating countries, the Executive Secretary of the National Universities Commission (NUC), Professor Abdullahi Yusufu Ribadu, stated that for a decade, the ACE Project had played a fundamental role in enhancing the capacity of higher education institutions across SSA to deliver high-quality training and applied research that address key development challenges across the continent. By promoting collaboration and training in critical fields, the project had successfully produced a highly skilled workforce capable of fostering





*L-R: Focal Point/Coordinator, ACE Impact, Nigeria, Dr Joshua Atah, PSC Chair and NUC Executive Secretary, Professor Abdullahi Ribadu, Secretary-General of the Association of African Universities, Professor Olusola Bandele Oyewole, and Task Team Lead, ACE Impact, Ms Namrata Tognatta, during the PSC meeting in Accra, Ghana*

economic growth and addressing critical challenges in Africa.

Highlighting Nigeria's participation in the ACE Project, Professor Ribadu stated that despite a bumpy beginning, the Nigerian ACEs had demonstrated resilience, innovation, and a strong commitment to research and academic excellence in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), Agriculture, Health and Education. He noted that by fostering collaborations with institutions and academics from around the globe, pursuing and achieving global recognition and reaching major milestones in research

breakthroughs, the 17 Nigerian ACEs had set a new benchmark for higher education across the region.

Considering that the project closes in June 2025, when funds from the development partners, World Bank and the French Development Agency (AFD), would cease, the PSC Chair urged stakeholders to ensure that efforts are intensified to sustain the innovations under ACE Impact beyond the project closure.

Launched in 2014 in collaboration with African regional bodies and governments, the first phase of the ACE Project established 22 Centres across eight West and Central African countries

to address higher skills, applied research and innovation requirements of SSA to promote growth and competitiveness.

The successes of ACE saw the emergence of two successor regional projects; ACE II, launched in 2016 with 29 centres across eight Eastern and Southern African countries and First & Second ACE Impact which was launched in 2019 and supports 54 centres across 11 West and Central African countries. These three projects have supported 80 competitively selected ACEs in over 50 universities across 20 countries in SSA with specialisations in regional development priority areas



*Executive Secretary of the NUC, Professor Ribadu inspecting the exhibition stand for Nigeria's Africa Centre of Excellence in Neglected Tropical Diseases and Forensic Biotechnology, during the ACE@10 event*

to deliver high-quality postgraduate training, skills-upgrading for professionals, applied research, entrepreneurship and innovation in high priority sectors such as Agriculture/ Water, Health, Energy, Environment, Engineering, Digital Development, Urban Transport, Mining and Education.

By leveraging economies of scale, through enhancing teaching/research facilities, sharing good practices in teaching and learning, promoting cross-border collaboration and research networks, as well as

collectively addressing the needs of higher-level skills and research/innovation for the priority sectors, the ACE Projects have achieved remarkable results. These include significantly expanding the capacity of postgraduate training with an enrolment of more than 77,000 students (which include over 6,900 PhD and 27,500 Masters) over 26% of whom are female and increasing research output with over 9,200 publications. The Projects also improved linkages with industries, resulting in more than 13,400 internships, and enhanced academic

quality with 500 academic programmes accredited at the national level and over 100 accredited by globally-recognised accrediting agencies.

To support project implementation in participating countries, the World Bank and AFD committed US\$ 657 million and US\$72 million, respectively, from which disbursements are made to the ACEs upon achievement of project Disbursement-Linked Indicators (DLIs). To guarantee their sustainability beyond the expiration of funds from





*The Executive Secretary, NUC, Professor Abdullahi Yusufu Ribadu, flanked on his left by the Coordinator, ACE Impact Nigeria, Dr Joshua Atab, and on his right by the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Lagos, Professor Folashade Tolulope Ogunsola, the Vice-Chancellor of the Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Professor Nnenna Ori (left), during the ACE@10 event in Accra, Ghana*

the development partners, the Centres collectively managed to externally generate revenues exceeding US\$ 175 million.

Building on its successes, the ACE Project is working with partners and mobilising resources with a focus on sharing best practices, further strengthening institutional capacities, fostering innovation and technology transfer, and consolidating in-country and cross-border collaborations, in priority sector areas, for greater impact.

The event, titled “ACE@10: Africa Higher Education Centers of Excellence: A Decade of Impact, Innovation, and Excellence” was co-organised by the Association of African Universities (AAU) and the Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA), with

support from the World Bank and AFD. It served as a platform for the ACEs to highlight their transformative journey and contributions at local, national, and regional levels within key sectors.

Participants included representatives from the ACEs and their host universities (Vice-Chancellors, centre directors, researchers and students), governments of the ACE participating countries (ministers and senior officials from ministries of finance, planning, higher education, etc.), regional and international organisations and foundations, private sector and industries, academic partner institutions, sector experts and the media.

# CE-sPESS, FUTO ADDRESSES DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT, BUILDS COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

*By Chioma Sunny-Adikwu*

When floods strike or erosion eats away at farmlands, the impact often extends beyond damaged property. It threatens livelihoods and community stability. At the Federal University of Technology, Owerri, a quiet revolution is underway to build resilience before disaster strikes. Through its Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Procurement, Environmental and Social Standards (CE-sPESS), hundreds of professionals are being trained to understand and mitigate disaster risks, building resilience one community at a time.

An intensive executive workshop, part of the Centre's short course series on environmental standards, brought together participants from fields as varied as environmental science, engineering, urban planning, and emergency response agencies; each seeking practical tools to better safeguard communities against the growing risks of climate-related disasters.

Welcoming participants during the opening ceremony, the Centre Leader, Professor Gloria Chukwudebe, explained that the

training aimed to address the growing threats of natural disasters, offering tools, techniques, and strategies for disaster preparedness, risk mitigation, and resilient recovery planning. The workshop would also expose participants to the causes and patterns of natural hazards and help them to develop skills in geospatial analysis and risk mitigation planning.

*“We aim to enhance resilience strategies for communities vulnerable to environmental disasters and provide participants with practical frameworks for monitoring and evaluation in disaster contexts”,* she said.

The facilitators comprised erudite scholars from the environmental and geophysical sciences. Leading the team was the coordinator of the module, Professor Alexander Iheanyichukwu Opara, who is





*Participants and facilitators after the workshop*

the Chief Research Officer of the Centre and a Professor of Geology with an interest in environmental (water, soil and air) studies. He introduced the module- Natural Hazards, Disaster Risk Management and Community Resilience and extensively handled the sessions on Geospatial Technology and Applications in Natural Disaster Monitoring, Evaluation and Mitigation.

Modules covered included Understanding the Concept of Environmental Hazards; GIS-MCA-based Approach to Flood Risk Assessment in Imo State; Geospatial Application in Natural Disaster Management; and Flood Disaster and Management. Others were Soil Erosion Processing and Dynamics; Coastal Degradation: Causes, Effects and Mitigation; Deforestation, Drought and Desertification; Landslides, Land Subsidence and Volcanic Eruptions; and Geostatistical Techniques for Analysis of Natural Disaster Data

Major highlights of the workshop included a technical session on Geospatial

Application in Disaster Monitoring, hands-on demonstrations with GIS data on hazard-prone zones in Nigeria, and interactive question and answer sessions, peer discussions and shared field experiences.

Participants described the workshop as successful, adding that it had enhanced their capacity for disaster mapping and impact modelling while strengthening real-time collaboration between academia and disaster management professionals.

According to Dr Francisca Egenuga, a participant, the most important thing is that they were leaving with actionable frameworks for community engagement and early warning systems. “It is recommended that institutionalised disaster preparedness training be part of annual environmental audits. There is a need for the use of open-source geospatial tools in environmental planning. More importantly, strong partnerships with NEMA, Red Cross, and local emergency response agencies are required to improve disaster risk management in our society”, she added.

# NIGERIA, GHANA EXPLORE SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT STRATEGIES AS SPESSCE-UNIBEN LEADS UNDERGRADUATES TO ACCRA

*By Jeremiah Ugwu*



*Undergraduates of SPESSCE-UNIBEN in Ghana for the SPP training*

In a move to foster cross-border collaboration and promote sustainable development practices, the Sustainable Procurement, Environmental and Social Standards Enhancement Centre of Excellence (SPESSCE) at the University of Benin recently led a delegation of outstanding undergraduate students to Accra, Ghana, for a high-level training programme

on Sustainable Public Procurement (SPP). The week-long training brought together participants from Nigeria and Ghana to explore real-world strategies for embedding sustainability into public procurement systems.

According to the Centre Leader, Professor Sylvester Osuji, the programme marked a key milestone in SPESSCE-



UNIBEN's mission to build professional capacity in procurement systems that are transparent, environmentally sound, and socially responsible. The Centre Leader, who was represented by the Student Coordinator, Dr Animetu Rawlings, disclosed that the participants gained valuable experience through practical, hands-on workshops that allowed them to apply sustainable procurement principles in simulated scenarios.

The students participated in various interactive sessions, fostering dynamic discussions and exchanging diverse perspectives on real-world challenges. According to Dr Rawlings, "in-depth case studies illustrated concrete examples of how effective procurement strategies can directly contribute to achieving various Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as promoting environmental sustainability, social inclusion, and economic efficiency within public sector projects". This comprehensive approach, she said, equipped participants with both the theoretical knowledge and practical skills needed to use procurement as a powerful tool for sustainable development.

The engagement also served to further reinforce the pivotal role of SPESSCE-UNIBEN as one of the leading institutions in the advancement of sustainable procurement. Through its unwavering

commitment to academic excellence, innovative approaches, and strategic partnerships, the Centre continues to set benchmarks in shaping the capacity of procurement professionals dedicated to sustainable development across the region.

The training was conducted in collaboration with key Ghanaian institutions, including the Public Procurement Authority (PPA) and the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA). These partnerships enabled the delegation to engage with experts, visit procurement institutions, and helped them to understand local implementation dynamics.

One of the students, Splendour Imobong Akanniyene, described the programme as "a truly transformational academic and professional experience and an opportunity to engage with peers and professionals from across West Africa". She said that the programme had significantly enhanced participants' understanding of regional collaboration and its importance in driving sustainable, transparent, and inclusive public service delivery.







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