



HCD 2.0 Program

...building a healthy, educated & productive Nigeria

SPECIAL EDITION

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HCD 2.0 Strategy To
Tackle Social Challenges,
Empower States** PG 7

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At World Bank/IMF Spring Meetings VP Shettima Pushes For Nigeria's HCD 2.0 Agenda

● **Calls For Evidence-Based Interventions, Stronger Global Partnerships In Education, Health, Labour Sectors**

By Enam Obiosio

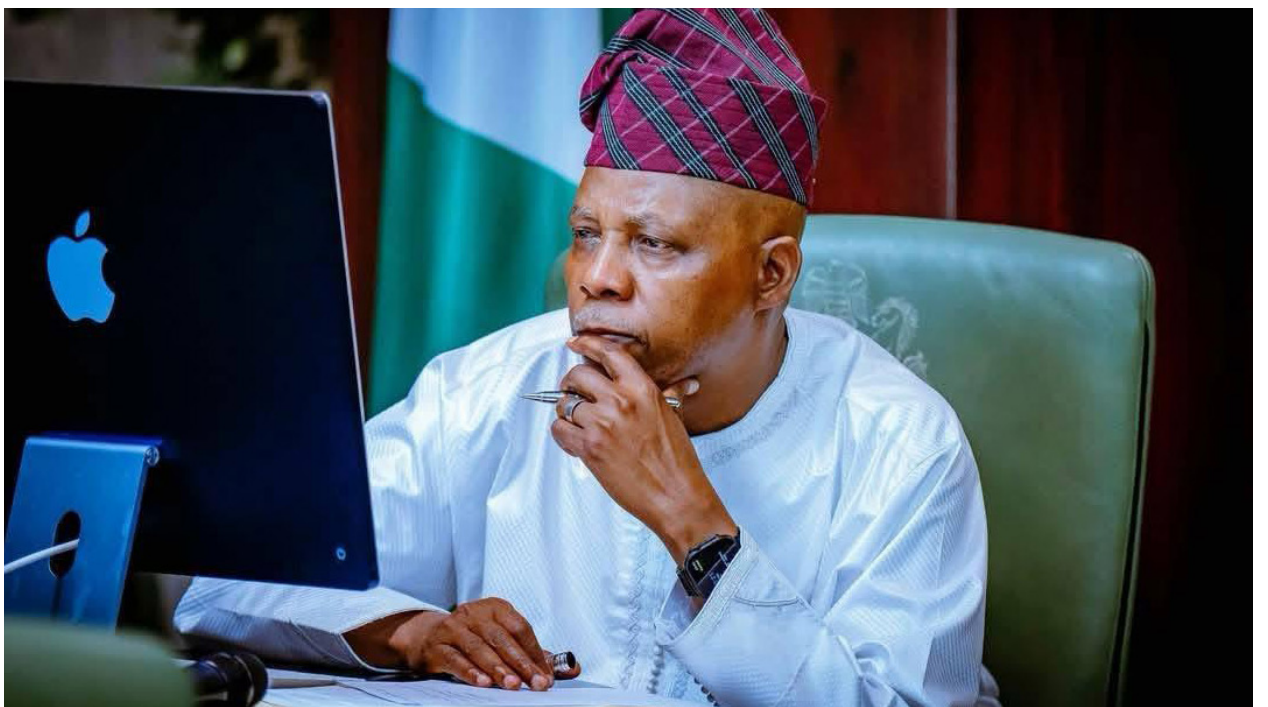
Vice President Kashim Shettima has called for stronger international collaboration to advance Nigeria's Human Capital Development 2.0 (HCD 2.0) strategy.

He reaffirmed the commitment of the administration of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu to positioning human potential at the heart of national development, according to Stanley Kingsley Nkwocha, Senior Special Assistant to The President on Media & Communications, Office of The Vice President.

Speaking virtually at a high-level roundtable on the sidelines of the 2025 World Bank/IMF Spring Meetings, VP Shettima said that the success of HCD 2.0 would hinge on data-driven, evidence-based interventions and sustained political will.

The HCD 2.0 programme is designed to elevate Nigeria's Human Capital Index (HCI) and equip Nigeria to face both national and global challenges, including climate change and digital transformation.

The Vice President pointed out that the meeting was necessitated by the urgency to invest in the Nigerian people



Vice President Kashim Shettima

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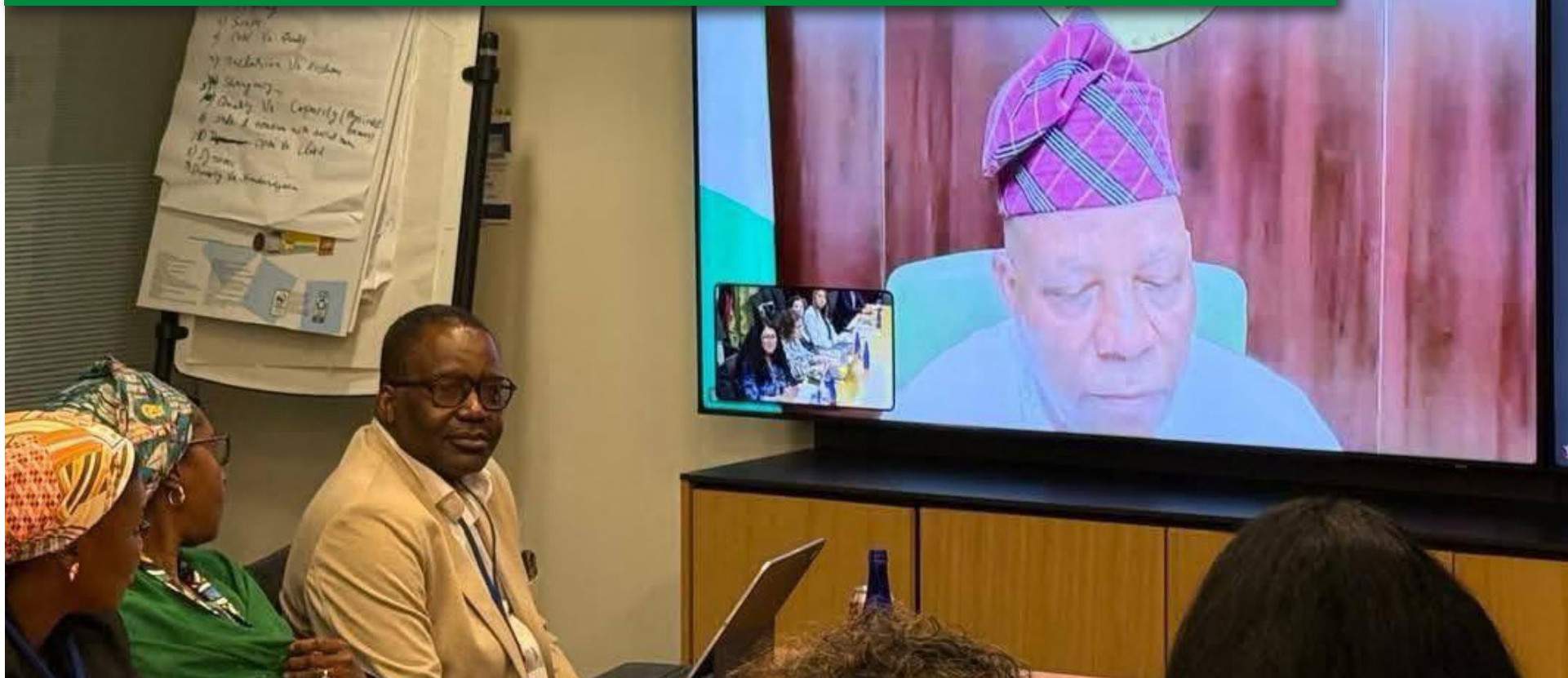
...driving sustainable
economic growth,
boosting productivity and
reducing poverty

Human Capital Development in Nigeria



Human
Capital
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in Nigeria

At World Bank/IMF Spring Meetings, VP Shettima Pushes For Nigeria's HCD 2.0 Agenda



Senator Ibrahim Hassan Hadejia, Deputy Chief of Staff to the President and Chairman of the HCD 2.0 Core Working Group; Mrs. Zainab Ahmed, Former Honourable Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, Executive Director for the Africa, World Bank Group (m), and Ms. Rukaiya El-Rufai, Special Adviser to the President on the National Economic Council (NEC) and Climate Change, and National Coordinator of the HCD Program at a high-level roundtable on the sidelines of the 2025 World Bank/IMF Spring Meetings in Washington D.C.

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and by the recognition that true national wealth is found not in natural resources, but in human potential.

"This meeting, for us, is not just another item on our global agenda. It is a continuation of a journey whose beginnings I had the privilege of witnessing about seven years ago. True national wealth is found not in natural resources, but in human potential.

"We will offer our HCD 2.0 Strategy the political backing it deserves to be the priority of our nation, and His Excellency, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, has never wavered on this," he said.

The session featured key stakeholders from the World Bank, including Executive Director, Hajiya Zainab Shamsuna Ahmed; Regional Director for Human Development in the Western and Central Africa, Trina Haque; Senior Social Protection Specialist and Regional Task Team Leader, Africa West & Central region, Tina George, and Chief Economist for Human Development in the World Bank Group, Norbert Shady.

The Nigerian delegation included the Deputy Chief of Staff to the President/ Chair of the HCD Core Working Group, Senator Ibrahim Hassan Hadejia and Special Adviser to the President on National Economic Council & Climate Change/National Coordinator of HCD programme, Rukaiya El-Rufai.

VP Shettima reiterated the federal government's determination to ensure the continuity and deepening of the HCD agenda.

"Government is a continuum. Nowhere is this truer than in programmes that demand patience, vision, and long-term commitment—programmes such as our HCD programme," he noted.

He revealed that under HCD 2.0, six priority indicators from the health, education, and labour force sectors have been selected as "quick wins" to guide policy interventions and track measurable progress.

"We have carefully curated priority indicators and an HCD Dashboard to track them. This allows us to make informed policy decisions and measure our progress against tangible benchmarks," VP Shettima said.

The Vice President also reaffirmed the administration's resolve to remain transparent and results-oriented to achieve measurable outcomes.

"We will continue to hold ourselves accountable and

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We have carefully curated priority indicators and an HCD Dashboard to track them. This allows us to make informed policy decisions and measure our progress against tangible benchmarks

press forward toward our bold goal to elevate Nigeria among the top 80 countries in Human Capital Index rankings," he said.

Senator Shettima also called on the World Bank and other development partners to support the availability of disaggregated, state-level HCI data to enable more targeted interventions.

Stressing the need for equity and inclusiveness in implementing the HCD 2.0 strategy, he said, "We are leaving no sub-national in Nigeria behind. Some of the states have already set a template for the others, having localised the HCD strategies to align with the peculiarities of their people while, of course, aligning them with the

national strategy."

The World Bank representatives at the meeting committed to strengthening the bank's partnership with Nigeria to improve the country's HCI and proposed senior-level stakeholder engagement to identify optimal areas for technical support.

There were also several speeches from representatives of Nigerian state governments, including Akwa Ibom and Lagos, as well as representatives of other local and international development organisations.

Nigeria HCD 2.0 At WB/IMF Spring Meetings

Nigeria took center stage as it unveiled its next-generation Human Capital Development (HCD 2.0) strategy, drawing commendation from global development leaders and highlighting the country's resolve to integrate digital innovation and AI-driven solutions into its national transformation agenda.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Halil Dundar, Practice Manager of the Global Engagement and Knowledge (GEAK) unit at the Education Global Practice, World Bank, welcomed the Nigerian delegation with enthusiasm and optimism. "I am very pleased to learn that Nigeria recently launched its new Human Capital Development Plan on April 14," he said. "Congratulations on that milestone — it is a significant step forward."

Mr. Dundar worked extensively with Nigeria in the past, commended the boldness of the HCD 2.0 vision, while offering a sobering reminder: digital and AI strategies, no matter how innovative, will struggle without strong foundational systems.

He shared insights from a World Bank pilot program in Nigerian public schools that used AI-powered tutoring tools. The pilot revealed promising gains in student performance but also exposed deep infrastructural gaps.

"We selected schools that already had electricity," He Ringold recounted. "Most schools didn't have internet, so we supplied portable routers. Computers were sourced from surplus donations. The tools worked — but only because we patched the basics together."

His message was clear: digital transformation must be built on the bedrock of reliable infrastructure — electricity, internet, and hardware. "Infrastructure is not optional," he stressed. "It is essential."

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Vice President Kashim Shettima virtually attending a high-level roundtable on the sidelines of the 2025 World Bank/IMF Spring Meetings.

At World Bank/IMF Spring Meetings, VP Shettima Pushes For Nigeria’s HCD 2.0 Agenda

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Nigeria’s Strategy: Coordination at the Top

Representing Nigeria’s federal government, Senator Ibrahim Hassan Hadejia, Deputy Chief of Staff to the President and Chairman of the HCD 2.0 Core Working Group, took the floor to outline the leadership architecture of the new initiative.

“This is not just a program. It is a coordinated, high-level push involving all tiers of government,” Senator Hadejia said. “We are committed to aligning federal and state priorities around education, health, and skills development.”

Building on his remarks, Ms. Rukaiya El-Rufai, Special Adviser to the President on the National Economic Council (NEC) and Climate Change, and National Coordinator of the HCD Program, emphasised the importance of federal-state synergy. As the National Coordinator of the HCD Program,

Ms. El-Rufai noted that the NEC platform — which convenes federal ministers and governors — ensures policy coherence and unified action across the country.

“We have several state representatives joining us virtually today,” she stated, acknowledging that connectivity issues had hindered participation. “But we are encouraged by the interest and commitment being shown across the states.”

HCD 2.0: A Vision for the Digital Age

The upgraded HCD 2.0 plan is envisioned as a leap from traditional development programs. With AI, machine learning, and digital transformation at its core, it seeks to leverage data, technology, and partnerships to close the human capital gap in Nigeria — the most populous country in Africa.

The Nigerian delegation expressed strong interest in aligning with global initiatives such as the World Bank’s Global Challenge Program on Digital

Transformation, which was introduced during the session. Additional insights were expected from Alex Twinomughisha (Education Global Practice); Mazelize

Gorgens (Human Capital Project), and from Tina George, Program Leader for Human Development, whose upcoming remarks would round out a session brimming with promise.

The meeting served not only as a platform for Nigeria to showcase its renewed commitment to human capital investment, but also as a call to action for development partners, private sector players, and technology providers.

“The future of Nigeria’s prosperity rests on its people,” Mr. Dundar noted. “And the world is watching with hope — and with the readiness to support.”

As Nigeria looks to operationalise HCD 2.0, the focus will be on building the systems, infrastructure, and institutions needed to make digital transformation truly inclusive — and truly impactful.



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Human Capital
Development
in Nigeria



Advancing Nigeria's Human Capital:

HCD 2.0 Strategy, and Structure



Nigeria's HCD 2.0 Gains Global Spotlight With World Bank, State-Level Engagement



Vice President Kasim Shettima (m right) in agbada; Dr. Rolf Alter (l), of the Hertie of School, and other development partners, during a visit to the Vice President at the State House in Abuja.

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Nigerian delegation pledged to improve technical access for states, promote shared learning with neighboring countries...

By Jennete Ugo Anya

Nigeria's Human Capital Development (HCD) 2.0 initiative continued to generate significant attention as global development leaders and state-level representatives engaged in a high-level session exploring digital transformation, education, and AI-driven solutions for inclusive growth.

While the main plenary saw federal delegates from Nigeria laying out a bold vision for national transformation, a noteworthy dimension of the gathering came through virtual participation from the Nigerian states, reaffirming the HCD Program's ethos of bottom-up collaboration.

The Gombe State representative, speaking virtually, expressed gratitude for the opportunity to be part of the initiative. “Good afternoon, everyone. I am representing the Gombe State HCD Program. Thank you for this opportunity,” they said — a brief but symbolic moment that showcased the growing decentralisation of human capital policy execution in Nigeria.

Though several other state representatives faced technical connectivity issues, organizers noted their presence and commitment to the dialogue. The participation, albeit uneven due to digital challenges, underlined a recurring theme of the event: the digital divide is real, and any strategy involving digital equity must grapple with that foundational reality.

World Bank's Human Development Team Weighs In

The event featured an impressive lineup of senior World Bank officials and technical experts, each reinforcing the Bank's support for Nigeria's reform drive.

Trina Haque, the Practice Manager for Health covering Western and Central Africa, including Nigeria, set the tone for broader regional perspectives in health-centered development strategies.

Tina George, Program Leader for Human Development, echoed the need for holistic planning across education, health, and workforce development. Her involvement signals continued World Bank attention on aligning human capital priorities with digital transformation efforts.

The session also saw the reintroduction of Dina Ringold, Director of Strategy and Operations in the Human Development Vice Presidency, who has a longstanding relationship with Nigeria's development agenda. “I have worked closely with Nigeria in the past and am excited to reconnect through this important initiative,” she said, emphasising the significance of foundational infrastructure in deploying digital and AI solutions successfully.

The Digital Frontier: Equity, Innovation, and Education

From the frontier of tech-based interventions, Ayla Huseynli, Global Director of the Digital Equity (EQ) Unit under the Human Capital Project, spoke about the operational challenges and strategic opportunities of embedding digital inclusion into human capital development. Her role bridges both field operations and high-level design, placing her at the nexus of impact.

Meanwhile, Arianna Legovini, who leads the Education Technology portfolio for Africa, brought her deep experience to bear. With over a decade of work in Nigeria, she is currently stationed at the World Bank's Global

EdTech Unit, where she focuses on scalable, cost-effective tech-enabled learning solutions. “We are already seeing results,” Legovini noted in a side conversation, referencing pilot programs showing improved student outcomes through the use of AI-driven tutoring tools.

Bridging the Center and the States

This mix of high-level international expertise and grassroots Nigerian representation reflects a growing consensus that HCD 2.0 must be locally grounded, yet globally informed. From Gombe to Washington, there is recognition that no single layer of government or institution can deliver on Nigeria's human capital ambitions alone.

As the HCD 2.0 initiative progresses, the Nigerian delegation pledged to improve technical access for states, promote shared learning with neighboring countries, and leverage partnerships with development institutions, the private sector, and NGOs.

The session concluded with a renewed call for coordinated action — one that puts people, data, and equity at the center of national planning.

“This is not just a federal government strategy,” a delegate observed. “It is a national movement.”

Editorial

The Advancement of Human Capital Development To Secure Nigeria's Future In Good Stead

As a people deeply engaged in the evolution of development policy across Africa, we view the Human Capital Development (HCD) 2.0 programme as a timely and transformational leap toward a future where Nigerians — especially the youth — are equipped not just to survive but to lead in a global economy.

The 2025 IMF/World Bank Spring Meetings affirmed that belief in the most compelling way. In a session that explored digital health and education across the continent, we saw vivid proof that Africa's future lies in intentional, equity-driven digital transformation. And Nigeria, through the HCD 2.0 strategy, is positioning itself to lead that charge.

The session highlighted Rwanda's success story with Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered tools in public healthcare — a demonstration of what is possible when technology meets political will and purpose. Rwanda's use of AI to deliver early diagnosis for non-communicable diseases — particularly to rural populations — is more than innovation; it is impact. It reflects what HCD 2.0 in Nigeria is beginning to do: prioritising access, outcomes, and dignity in the way we serve people.

What makes HCD 2.0 particularly powerful is its grounding in data, systems thinking, and a whole-of-government approach. It recognises that health and education do not exist in isolation. For human capital to grow, the systems that support it — from digital infrastructure to frontline workers — must be intentionally strengthened. This is a welcome evolution from previous frameworks that often treated education and health as siloed sectors. And we are already seeing the difference.

Under HCD 2.0, Nigeria is embracing this systems mindset. Subnational governments are being equipped to use data to inform decision-making, track outcomes, and scale interventions that work. The programme acknowledges that the frontline — teachers, healthcare workers, administrators — are not just implementers but central actors in this transformation. It is why HCD 2.0 does not only focus on hardware or

skills is no longer optional. It is the foundation of our competitiveness in the 21st century.

But perhaps what is most refreshing about HCD 2.0 is its humility and realism. It does not pretend that transformation will happen overnight. Instead, it emphasises continuous learning, adaptive leadership, and data-driven governance. It empowers states to experiment, learn, and improve — building a culture of accountability and excellence from the ground up.

The successes so far — improved subnational data systems, enhanced workforce planning, stronger partnerships with global allies — are not just proof of concept. They are signs of momentum. HCD 2.0 is showing us that with clarity of purpose and institutional commitment, we can redesign the architecture of human development in Nigeria.

In a world where the future of work, health, and learning is being shaped by digital transitions and demographic shifts, Nigeria cannot afford to lag behind. HCD 2.0 is our opportunity

to leapfrog and accelerate — to not just catch up with the world but to define our own development path on our own terms.

The conversation at the Spring Meetings reminded me that while every country's context is different, the ambition to build resilient, thriving societies is universal. Nigeria's HCD 2.0 programme is not just a national effort; it is part of a broader African renaissance in reimagining governance and delivery. We are proud that with sustained investment, political will, and citizen engagement, we will deliver a future where every Nigerian — regardless of the background — has the tools and support to reach his/her full potential.

Under HCD 2.0, Nigeria is embracing this systems mindset. Subnational governments are being equipped to use data to inform decision-making, track outcomes...

digital platforms, but on the capacity and welfare of the people behind the systems.

This approach mirrors what we saw in the Rwandan example: technology as a tool to amplify the reach and effectiveness of human-centered delivery. It is a model that blends innovation with local context — one that HCD 2.0 is wisely adapting to Nigeria's unique demographic and development needs.

What excites me most is the shift in mindset the programme is promoting — from seeing human capital investment as a social good to viewing it as national economic strategy. With Nigeria's youthful population and immense talent pool, investing in health, education, and

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Nigeria Unveils Bold HCD 2.0 Strategy To Tackle Social Challenges, Empower States

By Ahmed Ahmed

Nigeria's delegation unveiled a revitalised national vision for human capital development — a bold and inclusive strategy known as HCD 2.0. With renewed urgency and local ownership at its core, the strategy reflects Nigeria's growing recognition that economic transformation must be powered by its people.

Speaking at the high-level session hosted by the World Bank, Ms. Rukaiya El-Rufai, Special Adviser to the President on the National Economic Council (NEC) and Climate Change, and National Coordinator of the HCD Program, described HCD 2.0 as a “forward-looking, decentralised strategy” that builds on lessons from the country's earlier efforts to address its human capital crisis.

“Our initial HCD 1.0 strategy responded to our alarmingly low Human Capital Index ranking — 160 out of 174 countries,” Ms. El-Rufai recalled. “That effort laid the groundwork. Now, HCD 2.0 injects renewed energy, urgency, and a decentralised structure that empowers states to lead implementation.”

Six Pillars, Ten Priorities

HCD 2.0 is anchored around six thematic pillars, from which ten actionable priorities have been crafted:

1. Health and Nutrition
2. Education
3. Labour Force Participation
4. Youth Skills and Empowerment
5. Livelihoods, especially in rural areas
6. Governance, Data, and Accountability

Ms. El-Rufai emphasised that the strategy shifts from reactive to proactive programming, with a strong emphasis on integrating livelihoods into the equation. “We are ensuring that HCD becomes relevant to daily life — especially in underserved communities,” she noted.

She cited a grassroots pilot program where families were given 15 fruit-bearing trees. “Just three of those trees became a sustainable income stream. That kind of practical support is what we mean by making HCD real and people-centered.”

Inclusivity, Infrastructure, and Innovation

What sets HCD 2.0 apart is its focus on digital transformation, gender equity, and foundational infrastructure. The strategy acknowledges that without electricity, internet, and digital devices, AI and digital tools cannot reach their full potential.

“Digital is not an accessory to HCD. It is central,” Ms. El-Rufai stated. “We are embedding digital access and financial inclusion across every pillar.”

Nigeria is also redefining governance for HCD delivery. The National Steering Committee — now chaired by the Vice President — includes traditional and religious leaders to ensure cultural legitimacy and grassroots mobilisation. Regional clusters and community platforms further democratise the process, giving voice to local realities.

Measurable Targets and Accelerated Focus

With just two years remaining in the



Rukaiya El-Rufai, Special Adviser to the President on NEC & Climate Change and National Coordinator, Human Capital Development in Nigeria

current administration's implementation window, Nigeria has set six core focus indicators for accelerated impact:

- Under-five mortality
- Stunting rates
- Out-of-school children
- Learning poverty
- Youth employment and livelihoods
- Implementation and tracking capacity

These indicators, officially endorsed by the National Steering Committee, are

already being tracked in participating states.

Encouragingly, many states have localised the national strategy, establishing their own implementation teams and aligning their development plans with the national HCD agenda. Ms. Rukaiya El-Rufai praised this momentum, calling it “a sign that the strategy is working where it matters most — on the ground.”

Smart Financing and Performance

Monitoring

HCD 2.0 also pushes for a fiscal rethink, urging states to strategically increase their budgets for health, education, and social protection. Several states are now leveraging both domestic revenues and federal allocations to widen their social investment footprint.

To ensure accountability, Nigeria has rolled out a performance monitoring framework. Unlike punitive models, this approach is designed to empower rather than shame.

“We are using data not as a stick but as a compass,” said Ms. El-Rufai. “The Vice President is personally committed to this performance agenda.”

A National Movement, Not Just a Federal Plan

From grassroots tree-planting to AI-enabled tutoring pilots, the HCD 2.0 strategy represents a whole-of-society shift toward smarter, data-driven, and more inclusive human capital investment. Ms. El-Rufai was emphatic that the effort transcends politics or bureaucracy.

“This is not just a federal plan,” she said. “It is a national movement — powered by states, communities, and the people themselves.”

As development partners, the private sector, and international agencies continue to engage, Nigeria's HCD 2.0 strategy is being viewed as a model for scalable,



What sets HCD 2.0 apart is its focus on digital transformation, gender equity, and foundational infrastructure. The strategy acknowledges that without electricity, internet, and digital devices, AI and digital tools cannot reach their full potential

World Bank's Global Digital Challenge Program Offers Nigeria A Blueprint For Equitable Digital Transformation

By Jennete Ugo Anya

As Nigeria deepens its commitment to transforming human capital, the World Bank's Global Challenge Program on Digital Resilience is offering a critical framework for ensuring that digital tools move beyond hype and into the realm of real-world impact. During a compelling session at the 2025 IMF/World Bank Spring Meetings, representatives from the World Bank shared insights on how digital systems — when designed with local realities in mind — can revolutionise service delivery in countries like Nigeria.

A senior official from the World Bank's Digital Development vertical, with deep experience working on Nigeria, introduced the Global Challenge Program as a strategic initiative focused not simply on digital expansion but on ensuring digitalisation serves people, particularly in core service sectors like education, health, and livelihoods. The core message was clear: digital transformation must be judged by its effectiveness, efficiency, and equity — not just its scale.

"Connectivity alone is not development," the representative said. "It is not enough for citizens to have mobile phones or access to streaming services. True digitalisation must translate into better access to education, more effective healthcare, and increased livelihood opportunities — especially for marginalised communities."

A recurring theme throughout the presentation was the critical importance of foundational digital infrastructure. In many developing countries, and particularly in Nigeria, the lack of reliable electricity, patchy internet access, and inconsistent bandwidth all pose significant barriers to service delivery. The World Bank emphasised that these challenges cannot be solved with a one-size-fits-all approach. Rather, digital infrastructure must be tailored to regional readiness and capacity, while still maintaining interoperability — the ability for different systems to communicate and share data seamlessly.

"If we cannot collect, analyze, and act on data across systems — and across borders when necessary — we cannot expect to deliver services effectively. That is why interoperability is at the

heart of any digital strategy," the speaker noted.

Equally vital is human capacity development. The World Bank urged governments and stakeholders to look beyond traditional notions of digital literacy. In education, for example, it is not just about students learning to code or navigate software; it is also about ensuring that teachers and administrators understand how to integrate digital tools into daily instruction and school

management. In other sectors, digital skills must be aligned with functional needs — not theoretical capabilities.

Another foundational piece of the digital transformation puzzle is trust. With the expansion of data-sharing across local, national, and even international platforms, the importance of data privacy, ethical governance, and responsible usage becomes paramount. "If people do not trust the system — if they worry their data will be misused or

ignored — then the system fails before it starts," the World Bank official emphasised.

One of the most promising aspects of the conversation centered on Artificial Intelligence (AI). While many lower-income countries may lack the resources to develop bespoke AI models, they can still leverage existing tools to achieve dramatic improvements in public service delivery. The World Bank shared early findings from a pilot AI tutoring project in Nigeria's public schools, where platforms powered by large language models such as ChatGPT were used to support learning. In just six weeks, the program recorded significant improvements in student outcomes, a signal that scalable, off-the-shelf AI solutions can make a meaningful difference when deployed strategically.

In vocational training, the bank also pointed to virtual labs and simulations as transformative tools — allowing

young Nigerians to practice skills in settings that would otherwise require expensive or unavailable physical equipment. These innovations, they stressed, do not just enhance the speed or cost-effectiveness of service delivery — they expand what's even possible.

"AI helps us do what we are already doing — only faster, better, and more affordably," the speaker stated. "And in some cases, it lets us do things we have never been able to do before."

In partnership with Nigeria's ambitious HCD 2.0 strategy, the World Bank's Global Digital Challenge Program stands as a vital ally — offering technical guidance, scalable models, and global experience that can help transform Nigeria's digital dreams into measurable results. For a country betting on its people as the true engine of economic growth, the fusion of human capital development and digital resilience may be the winning formula.



It is not enough for citizens to have mobile phones or access to streaming services. True digitalisation must translate into better access to education, more effective healthcare, and increased livelihood opportunities...



Human Capital Development: A Pillar For Nigeria's Renewed Hope Agenda

By Dapo Oyewole

As we continue to align our national priorities with the Renewed Hope Agenda, one of the most critical elements driving Nigeria's success is Human Capital Development (HCD). Investing in people—through education, health, skills development, and empowerment—is not just a pathway to prosperity but an essential driver of sustainable economic growth and national progress. By prioritising HCD, we ensure that Nigeria's workforce is prepared for the challenges of the future and positioned to contribute meaningfully to both national and global development.

In this regard, I must commend the exceptional leadership of Ms. Rukaiya El-Rufai, the Special Adviser to the President on the National Economic Council and Climate Change, and the National Coordinator of the HCD programme. She has been a trailblazer in the field, bringing innovative strategies, building strong partnerships, and leading the charge for transforming human capital development in Nigeria. Under her leadership, her team has made remarkable strides, driving impactful initiatives that continue to shape the future of Nigeria's human capital sector.

A recent highlight of these efforts was the 'National HCD Partners Roundtable' held on April 30th at the Hilton Hotel in Abuja, which I had the honour of attending and also moderating a panel on 'Emerging Trends in Human Capital Development: Key Implications for HCD 2.0'. The event, superbly organised by the Special Adviser and her team, brought together global experts, leaders from government, civil society, the international development community and senior representatives of the Berlin-based Hertie School of Government, for a high-



Mr. Dapo Oyewole, Senior Special Assistant to the President on International Cooperation

level panel discussion on the emerging trends in human capital development. My session underscored the need for evidence, innovation,

and strategic partnerships to enhance Nigeria's human capital outcomes. The discussions were followed by a courtesy visit to the

Vice President of Nigeria, His Excellency, Sen. Kashim Shettima, GCON, who with inspiring words of wisdom, reaffirmed the government's

commitment to human capital development and the political will to position Nigeria as a leader in HCD within Africa. This visit highlighted the deep alignment between government priorities and the HCD agenda.

The discussions at the Roundtable have already sparked impactful developments and meaningful progress, as my Office -given our international cooperation mandate - facilitated a visit from senior representations of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) who having heard all the great work being done, expressed keen interest in supporting Nigeria's HCD initiatives. The visit of Mr. Ernesto Soria and Mrs. Tonaina Ngororano from the OECD Public Governance Directorate reaffirmed their confidence in the progress made so far and their desire to contribute to our shared vision. This is a clear testament to the fact that investing in human capital development is an investment in both the present and the future.

Under the leadership of His Excellency, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR, the Championing of the cause by His Excellency, Vice President Kashim Shettima, GCON, and with the exceptional coordination of Special Adviser, Rukaiya El-Rufai, Nigeria is on a steady course to ensure that human capital development becomes one of the most visible and tangible dividends of our democracy. With a strong political will from both the President and Vice President, we are confident that our nation's human capital will continue to thrive, contributing to a prosperous future for all.

Mr. Dapo Oyewole is Senior Special Assistant to the President on International Cooperation.

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My session underscored the need for evidence, innovation, and strategic partnerships to enhance Nigeria's human capital outcomes



Dr. Rolf Alter, of the Hertie School, in a handshake with VP Kashim Shettima

Nigeria's Human Capital Momentum Draws Commendation, Urgency from Global Development Partners

By Majeed Salaam

Nigeria rolls out its revitalised Human Capital Development (HCD) 2.0 strategy, global development partners — including the World Bank — are not only applauding the country's progress but calling for greater urgency, intentionality, and scale.

At the 2025 IMF/World Bank Spring Meetings in Washington D.C., development experts reflected on Nigeria's trajectory with a tone of both celebration and strategic caution.

The conversation, anchored by the country's renewed push for digital integration in health, education, and governance,

revealed how Nigeria's HCD journey is becoming a reference point across West and Central Africa. For the World Bank, this moment is pivotal.

"In our regional strategy for West and Central Africa, we introduced a 'future-fit' pillar — one that explicitly prioritises digital transformation," said a World Bank Health Practice Manager. "Digital and energy access go hand-in-hand. You cannot power a rural clinic with tech-based diagnostics without stable electricity. You cannot run a telemedicine program without reliable internet. Nigeria is making progress on both fronts, but real success depends on layering interventions across

energy, digital infrastructure, and social services simultaneously. Coordination is no longer optional — it is essential."

This idea of "layered interventions" — combining cross-sector investments to unlock systemic change — was a recurring theme. Nigeria's efforts to expand electricity access, roll out digital connectivity, and integrate AI and tech into public service delivery are seen not as parallel initiatives but as interdependent. It is a systems problem that demands systems thinking.

Dina Ringold, a senior World Bank leader and one of the architects of the original Human Capital Index (HCI) and Nigeria's HCD Unit in 2018,

brought a personal dimension to the reflections. "As someone who helped launch the original Human Capital Index and Nigeria's HCD Unit, it is inspiring to see how far you have come," she said.

"Your program is now a global reference. The building blocks are in place: interoperable data systems, a multisectoral strategy, youth inclusion. The next step is embedding these gains permanently into your national systems."

The notion of permanence — ensuring that progress endures beyond pilot phases and donor cycles — was echoed across the session. Education and health sector experts emphasised that many good projects exist around the world, but few achieve sustained impact. What differentiates Nigeria's HCD 2.0 model, they argued, is its decentralised architecture that empowers states, its focus on tracking measurable outcomes, and its integration of digital governance tools from the outset.

Still, challenges remain. Speakers urged Nigeria to maintain a laser focus on embedding digital literacy across all levels of the education system. The call was not just for coding or software use, but for practical, scalable application of digital tools in classrooms, clinics, and administrative offices. Institutional governance also needs strengthening — especially at the state and local government levels — to ensure that innovations aren't stymied by bureaucracy or weak capacity.

Financing was flagged as another hurdle. For many rural and underserved areas, affordable infrastructure remains elusive. Data costs are high, and devices remain out of reach for large segments of the population. Drawing inspiration from countries like India, where a free mobile data campaign dramatically reduced costs, participants challenged Nigeria and its partners to rethink affordability not just as a pricing issue but as a policy opportunity.

Another recurring recommendation was the need for trusted and secure data systems. As Nigeria rolls out digital ID, AI-backed health solutions, and smart education tools, public trust in data privacy and ethical use becomes critical. Without it, uptake will be limited, and the full power of data-driven policy will go untapped.

The session concluded with a resounding affirmation: digital and AI solutions are no longer optional tools in the arsenal of development — they are central to any serious human capital strategy. Nigeria, participants agreed, is showing promising leadership. But the road ahead will demand more than enthusiasm — it will require strong institutions, inclusive infrastructure, and relentless focus on sustainability.

"We are excited to partner with Nigeria to sustain this momentum," one World Bank expert stated. "Let us not just scale what is working in Nigeria — let us make it a blueprint for Africa."

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...our program is now a global reference. The building blocks are in place: interoperable data systems, a multisectoral strategy, youth inclusion

At Abuja Roundtable

HCD 2.0 Program
building a healthy, educated & productive Nigeria

Rukaiya El-Rufai Rallies Stakeholders Around HCD 2.0, Civil Service Commitment



Ms. Rukaiya El-Rufai, Special Adviser to the President on the National Economic Council (NEC) and Climate Change, and National Coordinator of the HCD Program

By Kingsley Benson

At a high-level national roundtable in Abuja, Ms. Rukaiya El-Rufai, Special Adviser to the President on the National Economic Council (NEC) and Climate Change, and National Coordinator of the HCD Program, delivered a deeply resonant call for continuity, commitment, and recognition in Nigeria's Human Capital Development (HCD) journey. Moderating the event with a blend of warmth, candour, and institutional insight, Ms. El-Rufai reflected on the country's evolution from HCD 1.0

to the current HCD 2.0 strategy — describing it as both a generational relay and a strategic checkpoint for national development.

From the onset, Ms. El-Rufai made it clear that HCD 2.0 was more than a document or program — it was a long-term vision that must be upheld and refined by successive administrations. “We hope it is going to be a relay,” she said, “so that future governments will take this and create their own HCD 2.0. That would be a great checkpoint to take stock, galvanise energy, and especially motivate the civil servants among us.”

She drew the audience's attention to the story of Mr. Uduak Isaac, a career civil servant in Akwa Ibom State who, after years of dedicated service to the HCD agenda, was recently promoted by the state governor during the launch of the Arise Akwa Ibom HCD Strategy Programme. His recognition, Ms. El-Rufai noted, served as a symbolic validation for the silent, tireless workers who anchor policy continuity and implementation across administrations. “You know they say you would reap what you sow — but sometimes you may not. Yet today, the clouds moved, and the sun emerged for Mr. Isaac. Arise! And that is what

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At Abuja Roundtable, Rukaiya El-Rufai Rallies Stakeholders Around HCD 2.0, Civil Service Commitment



Rukaiya El-Rufai, Special Adviser to the President on NEC & Climate Change and National Coordinator, Human Capital Development in Nigeria

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happened.”

Applause filled the room as she encouraged participants to celebrate Mr. Isaac’s recognition — not only as a personal achievement but as inspiration for his peers in the civil service. “It is not easy to pull everyone together,” she said, alluding to the intricate coordination challenges HCD initiatives face across ministries, departments, and agencies. “This project is closely tied to service, and it takes a lot to sustain it. But moments like this show that people are watching, and effort will be rewarded.”

Ms. El-Rufai went on to spotlight key improvements made in the HCD 2.0 strategy. Beyond updated targets and expanded sectoral focus, she emphasised the strategy’s forward-looking nature — including built-in mechanisms for learning, adaptability, and what she called “future-proofing.” She noted that insights gathered from Nigeria’s participation in the 2025 IMF/World Bank Spring Meetings, particularly around the soon-to-be-launched Human Capital Index (HCI) framework, had already begun influencing the design and evolution of the strategy.

“We have not only infused lessons learned,” she explained, “we have taken a hard look at how to future-proof this work. And when I came back from Washington and looked at what we have developed, I realised: we are already aligned with global best practices. This strategy is standing the test of time — and development.”

With evident pride, Ms. El-Rufai reminded the room that many of the key players present had been part of the original HCD design workshop held at the State House years ago. She extended heartfelt

congratulations to everyone in the room — from federal and state government representatives to donor partners and civil society actors — for their contributions to a strategy now viewed as a regional model. “Please,” she urged, “can I ask every partner here to give yourselves a hand of applause?”

It was a moment of reflection, but also a rallying cry. Ms. El-Rufai’s words captured not just the technical ambition of Nigeria’s HCD efforts, but also the human spirit and institutional grit required to bring them to life. Her moderation reminded

all in attendance that while strategies and frameworks matter, it is the people — civil servants, policymakers, teachers, healthcare workers — who carry the baton forward.

Sustaining Momentum for HCD’s Strategy

Ms. El-Rufai brought her powerful moderation to a close at the national roundtable in Abuja, she reemphasised the forward momentum of Nigeria’s HCD 2.0 strategy — insisting it must evolve not only as a national framework but also as a resilient, regionally informed ecosystem.

Her concluding remarks offered a panoramic view of how Nigeria’s HCD journey is not only aligning with global best practices but anchoring itself in sustainability, inclusivity, and innovation.

Ms. El-Rufai reminded the audience that Nigeria’s HCD strategy had been carefully designed to remain “disruption-proof,” even in the face of upcoming changes in global benchmarks like the World Bank’s soon-to-be-launched Life Cycle Human Capital Index (HCI). “We created a strategy that will not be shaken by global shifts,” she said confidently. “We looked at the World Bank HCI, the UNDP’s approach, and even the new ECOWAS strategy — and infused them where necessary.”

Indeed, her remarks touched on an emerging consensus: that the HCD challenges Nigeria faces are not unique, but part of a broader, regional phenomenon. “As a bloc, ECOWAS has performed poorly on human capital indicators — even worse than some other sub-Saharan regions,” she noted. “That is why HCD has now been prioritised by the ECOWAS presidency, and Nigeria is playing a leadership role in shaping its regional strategy.”

Ms. El-Rufai spoke about Nigeria’s expanded governance structure for HCD 2.0, emphasising that no single actor or tier of government can achieve the strategy’s lofty goals alone. “What we can do,” she explained, “is create self-sustaining platforms — pockets of knowledge sharing, peer learning, and accountability — where dialogue continues even when projects or funding cycles end.”

This is why, beyond the formal Steering Committee and Core Working Group, new platforms have been institutionalised, including the Private Sector Partners Group, embedded within the Nigeria Economic

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We looked at the World Bank HCI, the UNDP’s approach, and even the new ECOWAS strategy — and infused them where necessary

Madam Koroma Rallies Global Support To Position Nigeria As Regional Leader In Human Capital Policy

By Ibrahim Mujtaba

In a spirited, cross-continental virtual dialogue on advancing Human Capital Development (HCD) in Nigeria and West Africa, Madam Finda Koroma, former Vice President of the ECOWAS Commission and now Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Africa HCD+, laid out a sweeping vision for building policy capacity across the region. Her rallying cry was clear: “We need to use Nigeria as a proxy for regional change — and that change must be driven by data.”

The meeting, held between the Office of the Vice President of Nigeria, international partners from the Hertie School of Governance in Germany, and key development actors, spotlighted Nigeria’s emerging leadership role in translating human capital ambitions into measurable, scalable reforms. At the heart of the agenda was a critical, often overlooked ingredient — reliable, high-quality data.

“We want decisions to be based on timely and quality data — which is absent. If we can inculcate that in Nigeria, we will change the entire narrative around policymaking in this region,” Madam Koroma stated.

During her tenure at ECOWAS, she helped mobilise funding for HCD across multiple West African states. That legacy continues as she now drives a new wave of collaborations with global think tanks, including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, GIZ, and possibly the MasterCard Foundation, to invest in capacity-building initiatives that empower Nigerian and regional policymakers.

Among the landmark efforts she highlighted were:

- The design of a dedicated HCD Survey with the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (NBS).
- A citizen-generated data tool co-developed with Stellenbosch University to improve accountability and transparency in governance.
- Ongoing negotiations with GIZ to support both bilateral and ECOWAS-level training programs, including potential joint training-of-trainers workshops in Nigeria and Germany.

In her remarks, Ms. Rukaiya El-Rufai, Special Adviser to the President on the National Economic Council (NEC) and Climate Change, and National Coordinator of the HCD Program, echoed Madam Koroma’s long-standing commitment to the cause.

“She has been one of our most humble and reliable partners since her days at ECOWAS. Much of the funding our states benefit from today was built on the foundation she helped lay,” Ms. El-Rufai noted.

The German delegation, led by Dr. Bernhard Knoll-Tudor, Ms. Susan Gosling, and Dr. Rolf Alter from the Hertie School, stressed the urgency of moving from data collection to policy execution. “Investment in infrastructure is important,” said Dr. Alter, “but investment in people — that is the key to lasting impact.”

A critical next step, according to the conversation, would be aligning this work with Nigeria’s upcoming Voluntary National Review (VNR) for 2025 — a formal United Nations (UN) process in which member states report on progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals. Dr. Alter suggested that Nigeria’s leadership in regional HCD training should feature prominently in that report, not just as a national achievement, but as a shared learning model for Africa.

“It is not about complaining of the lack of data,” he said. “It is about showing that Nigeria is building the solution — not just for itself, but for others.”

Madam Koroma also urged stronger engagement with the private sector —



Madam Finda Koroma, Former Vice President ECOWAS Commission and Chief Executive Officer of Africa Human Capital Development Plus (HCD+)

particularly mining companies, banks, and sectoral associations — to support evidence-based policymaking. “If every business depends on policies shaped by government, then they have a stake in ensuring those policies are informed by solid data,” she said.

Plans are already underway to prepare a two-page policy brief targeting the private sector, showcasing how better-trained policymakers and better-quality data can translate to more stable and predictable business environments.

Madam Koroma also hinted at a future mini-conference on Artificial Intelligence (AI), Big Data, and Policymaking, potentially co-hosted with Germany’s foreign ministry, to further cement Nigeria’s leadership in digital governance.

And in an inclusive gesture that underlines the pan-African ambition of the initiative, she offered to fund the participation of six Sierra Leonean officials — from education and health ministries — in the upcoming training program in Nigeria.

“We are committed beyond just the Gates Foundation,” she emphasised. “This is about changing how we govern, how we make decisions, and how we build the next generation of African policymakers.”

Remarkably as Nigeria prepares to present its next VNR at the UN in New York, this initiative may well become a showcase of what is possible when data, diplomacy, and determination intersect. And thanks to advocates like Madam Koroma, the continent just might be on the verge of a new human capital revolution — one grounded in shared responsibility, regional collaboration, and above all, evidence that drives action.

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If every business depends on policies shaped by government, then they have a stake in ensuring those policies are informed by solid data...



Mr. Temitola Adekunle-Johnson, Special Adviser (SAD) to the President on Job Creation & MSME (Office of the Vice President)

Human Capital At The Heart of Nigeria's Development – Insights From The HCD 2.0 Roundtable In Abuja

By Jennete Ugo Anya

Nigeria's quest for economic transformation lies a simple, powerful idea: invest in people. This message rang clear and unwavering at the recently concluded Nigerian National Human Capital Development (HCD 2.0) Roundtable held in Abuja, where public and private sector leaders, development partners, and global philanthropies gathered to chart a path forward for strengthening the nation's human capacity.

Among the voices that resonated most strongly was that of Mr. Ekenem Isichei, Deputy Director of Policy, Advocacy and Communications at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. With a calm yet passionate clarity, he outlined the Foundation's evolving support strategy for Nigeria's human capital agenda, emphasising a consistent focus on improving health outcomes, enhancing livelihoods, and scaling innovations that can catalyse inclusive growth.

"Our mission," Mr. Isichei said, "is about improving livelihoods and ensuring healthy, whole mothers and children—especially children under five." At the roundtable, he explained how the Foundation's work is anchored in maternal, newborn, and child health (MNCH), with a deliberate focus on reducing maternal mortality and raising child survival rates. But that mission, he noted, is not executed in a vacuum. "We look at what the government's priorities are," he said, "and then align our interventions to be supportive—where it fits our mission."

The foundation's approach is both strategic and adaptive, particularly in a

country as large and diverse as Nigeria. Over the past four years, it has deepened its investments in agricultural development—a pillar of both economic security and nutritional health. "How do we scale that across the country?" Mr. Isichei posed, referring to the foundation's efforts to expand its agricultural impact. "We are big on agricultural development."

Another critical area for the Foundation is Nigeria's primary health care system. Acknowledging the gaps in both infrastructure and access, Mr. Isichei stressed the importance of efficiency and integration. "We start with demand," he said, "but we also work around infrastructure—how to make primary health care systems truly work."

A striking dimension of the Foundation's vision involves technology, particularly digital identity and artificial intelligence. Drawing comparisons with India's digital ID model, Mr. Isichei pointed to the potential of a unified system in Nigeria. "With one number, you can access a range of services," he said. "That is efficiency." The foundation is exploring how such an approach could help Nigerians access everything from healthcare to credit more easily—particularly in underserved communities.

On the frontier of innovation, the Foundation is also turning its attention to economic opportunities for young Nigerians. "How do we scale up efforts around economic opportunities so people can access credit and jobs faster?" he asked. The goal is not just empowerment but sustainable, inclusive growth. "We're now exploring how to strengthen this area with a

focus on livelihoods—especially for women and mothers."

Currently, the foundation works intensively in five Nigerian states—Kano, Kaduna, Lagos, Jigawa, and Gombe—while also supporting strategic federal-level initiatives. But through its Human Capital Development work, it is increasingly looking to broaden its reach and deepen its partnerships. "We are asking ourselves: how do we improve Nigeria's HCD index?" Mr. Isichei said. "It is about measurable outcomes—in health, in productivity, and in economic inclusion."

One of the more exciting areas of future investment lies in artificial intelligence. The foundation is considering how AI could be deployed across its core sectors, particularly in the states where it already operates. "It is early," he noted, "but it is something we are definitely going to talk about this year."

As the roundtable drew to a close, what emerged was a renewed consensus: that human capital development is not a luxury, but a necessity for national progress. Mr. Isichei's reflections captured the spirit of the event—pragmatic yet hopeful, grounded yet ambitious.

"I am very pleased to meet you all," he said, with quiet sincerity. "And I am very impressed with what you have done. We are happy to hear that."

In a time of economic uncertainty and social complexity, the Abuja HCD Roundtable offered a rare space of clarity. It reminded stakeholders that the real wealth of a nation lies not in its natural resources or financial markets, but in the health, knowledge, and potential of its people.

At Abuja Roundtable, Rukaiya El-Rufai Rallies Stakeholders Around HCD 2.0, Civil Service Commitment

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Summit Group (NESG), and the Focal Persons Forum, which now operates across regional blocs to ensure contextual nuance and collaboration. Ms. El-Rufai pointed to Mr. Uduak Isaac once again — this time acknowledging his new leadership role for the South-South zone within this emerging structure.

Though her presentation was cut short for time, Ms. El-Rufai shared a high-level overview of the technical architecture guiding HCD 2.0. At its core are strategic workstreams designed not to replicate government programs but to act as catalytic enablers. "The MDAs and states are the real delivery systems," she stressed. "Our job is to support them through policy advocacy, coordination, and strategic acceleration — not parallel implementation."

Key workstreams include Programme Acceleration, focused on scaling what works, and Accountability Systems, which ensure that progress can be tracked transparently through prioritized indicators. These include both sectoral and cross-cutting metrics — but Ms. El-Rufai cautioned that while some indicators are being prioritised in the next two years, others remain on the broader radar for future cycles.

She also outlined several accelerator projects already in motion, including:

- Project FUKUU and clean cooking initiatives, which tie into health and environmental pillars and explore carbon credit linkages;
- The Hertie School model, aimed at mobilising resources and designing targeted capacity-building programs for state focal persons and MDAs;
- Private-sector driven solutions addressing out-of-school children, inspired by regional examples like Kenya;
- Innovations such as smart kits and solar-powered backpacks for schoolchildren, which include reusable sanitary pads to tackle the issue of learning poverty and prevent school dropouts among girls.

These ideas, Ms. El-Rufai noted, emerged not only from technical sessions but also from listening to partners and learning from global practices. "We have seen how lack of electricity and access to menstrual kits can lead to girls dropping out of school," she said, referencing innovations from Uganda. "We must keep digging, keep iterating — what we call progressive elaboration — and remain open to learning every day."

In her final remarks, El-Rufai urged all participants and partners to stay connected and proactive as the implementation phase unfolds. "Let us understand what everyone is doing," she said. "Let us work together to deliver visible results in the short term — by the end of this administration — while laying a solid foundation for those who will come after us."

With those words, the national roundtable ended not just as a policy gathering, but as a clarion call — one that framed Nigeria's HCD 2.0 strategy not as a fixed blueprint, but as a living, breathing movement, deeply rooted in collaboration, accountability, and a shared vision for human dignity and development.

Hertie School Charts New Course For Nigeria's Human Capital With Global Lessons, Local Resolve



Dr. Rolf Alter, Ms. Susan Gosling, and Dr. Bernhard Knoll-Tudor, all from the Hertie School

By Jennete Ugo Anya

At the heart of Nigeria's Human Capital Development (HCD 2.0) Roundtable held in Abuja, a quiet revolution was being discussed—not in political terms, but in the language of capability, responsibility, and global knowledge exchange.

The gathering brought together senior officials, development partners, and international collaborators in a high-level conversation about how to move Nigeria's human capital agenda from aspiration to action.

One of the most compelling contributions came from Dr. Rolf Alter of the Hertie School of Governance, a Berlin-based institution renowned for its work at the intersection of policy, education, and digital transformation. His message was clear: human capital development can no longer be approached in isolation from the realities of governance, technology, and institutional reform.

Dr. Alter spoke with conviction as he explained the Hertie School's unique global positioning. The institution, he noted, is not content with simply teaching public policy or producing scholarly research. Instead, it is actively embedded in the reform ecosystems of various countries—Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Azerbaijan, and several European nations, among others. And now, Nigeria is next.

"What we came here to do," Dr. Alter began, "is to discuss how we can support an ongoing reform process—particularly in human capital development—by drawing from our practical interventions across the world." This approach, he said, involves helping governments not just to craft good strategies but to carry them out with precision, accountability, and long-term vision.

In Nigeria, the proposal presented by the Hertie School centers on four strategic pillars. The first is digital governance—a natural strength for a university widely regarded as a European leader in artificial intelligence in the public sector. The second is development finance, an area increasingly important as states and agencies seek alternative funding models to close critical gaps. Third is entrepreneurship education, which Dr. Alter described as "absolutely key for Nigeria." And finally, institutional strengthening—a 'whole-of-government' approach designed to ensure that policies are not soloed but implemented in coordinated, systemic ways.

These proposals were not simply theoretical. They were offered as part of a living conversation with the Nigerian government and its development allies, testing which areas could be prioritised to

upscale public officials and align efforts more closely with national objectives. Dr. Alter made it clear that the Hertie School's role would be that of a co-learner and contributor, rather than a distant advisor. "The method we apply is an exchange," he explained. "It is not about the methodology. It is about what people do in other places and what works well for them, so that it produces, in the end, that type of capital that becomes the valuable input for economic opportunities for the country."

Among the themes running through the roundtable was a candid acknowledgment of the responsibility that comes with development. "We have the commitment to be responsible," one participant noted with gravity. "We talk about allocating resources, making policy decisions—and then we must check whether it actually happened." There was no room here for hollow declarations. Accountability, it was agreed, must be the bedrock of any effective HCD 2.0 strategy.

In fact, many participants saw accountability not as a bureaucratic formality, but as a tool of empowerment. When citizens and officials alike begin to see their roles in development as interconnected, Dr. Alter suggested, it is possible to generate the kind of human capital that does not just fill jobs but drives innovation, resilience, and national transformation.

The sense of partnership at the roundtable was tangible. Ms. Rukaiya El-Rufai, Special Adviser to the President on the National Economic Council (NEC) and Climate Change, and National Coordinator of the HCD Program, welcomed the Hertie School's engagement and commended the ongoing shift from abstract policy discussions to tangible, results-driven frameworks. "We convene, we hold people accountable," she had noted earlier. Now, with global institutions like Hertie School offering strategic support, the process of implementation may become more deliberate, more ambitious, and more aligned with the complexity of Nigeria's development needs.

As the session drew to a close, it was evident that the roundtable had done more than spark ideas—it had set in motion a process of serious engagement. And as Dr. Alter handed over the floor, his words lingered in the minds of those present: "We have hopefully created with that a strategy, yes—but now, we must make sure there is human capital that is truly valuable."

In a country as dynamic and diverse as Nigeria, that challenge is monumental. But with a new model of collaboration rooted in shared learning, cross-border expertise, and local commitment, it may finally be within reach.

Strategy Meets Action At Nigeria's National Human Capital Development Roundtable

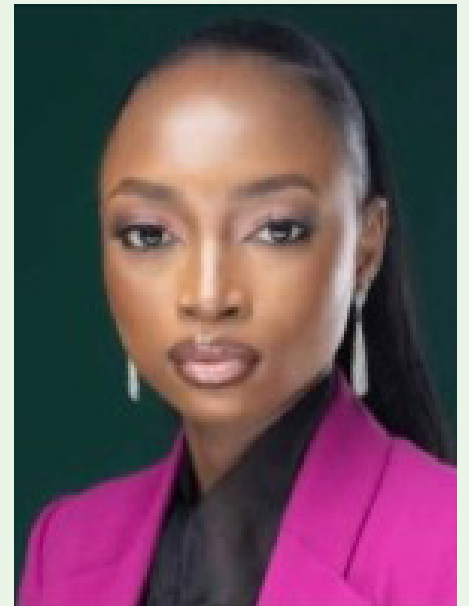
By Ahmed Ahmed

In the sunlit halls of a policy venue in Abuja, a quiet but powerful transformation was underway. Nigeria's National Human Capital Development (HCD 2.0) Roundtable, a gathering that has become a barometer for the country's progress in investing in its people, reconvened with a sharpened focus—not just on strategy, but on the urgent shift to implementation.

This year's roundtable was marked by a sobering clarity: it is not enough to design grand strategies on paper. As Sarah Sambo, one of the key voices in the session, put it, "Having a strategy is just one thing, but having the people who are implementing the strategy have the capacity and understanding of what the strategy is supposed to be and how to arrive at actionable outcomes—that is what is most important to us."

That statement captured the core spirit of the dialogue. The time for theoretical frameworks has passed. What matters now is equipping people at every level—especially at the subnational level—with the skills, tools, and contextual awareness to bring those strategies to life.

Central to this drive is a new partnership with the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin, a globally respected institution known for its innovation in public policy and digital governance. According to Sambo, this partnership is not just symbolic—it is deeply practical. "We are looking at it from a focal presence point of view and a state point of view to see how we can support the subnational level to ensure



Sarah Sambo, Program Officer, HCD 2.0

"We do not want a situation where states have funding gaps and do not know how to access funding, either at the state level or from various angles," she noted. The partnership with Hertie is expected to address this by expanding the capacity of states to not only generate internal revenue but also attract investments aligned with human development goals.

What made the roundtable distinct this time was its atmosphere of co-ownership. As Sambo emphasised: "We are co-partners, like she said." The work of human capital development is no longer about waiting for top-down instructions—it is



The time for theoretical frameworks has passed. What matters now is equipping people at every level—especially at the subnational level—with the skills, tools, and contextual awareness to bring those strategies to life

they are well-equipped to, one, understand the strategy because it is key to their state's needs, and two, to be able to imbibe some of the things that they will learn," she said.

From digital governance to effective policymaking, the goal is to empower the states to translate national priorities into local solutions. Each state in Nigeria faces its own developmental realities, and for the country's HCD 2.0 strategy to succeed, it must be flexible enough to adapt to local needs while retaining coherence at the federal level. This is the delicate balance the roundtable seeks to achieve.

Resource mobilisation was another critical theme that surfaced during the session. For many states, funding gaps remain a significant hurdle. Some lack the expertise or networks to access existing pools of capital—whether domestic, donor-driven, or through innovative financing models. Sambo acknowledged this reality.

about joint stewardship. The roundtable reflected this mindset, not just in the formal discussions, but in the informal introductions, side conversations, and the open exchange of ideas that flowed freely.

There was also a sense of humility and curiosity, as she laughingly remarked in closing, "Oh, we did not do anything. No." It was a reminder that while the process of building human capital is complex, it is also collaborative—and that progress comes not from declarations, but from the collective willingness to learn, adapt, and act.

In the end, the roundtable was not just another meeting. It was a signal of intent, a reflection of growing maturity in how Nigeria approaches the development of its most valuable resource—its people. With strategy in hand and implementation now front and center, the journey continues with a renewed sense of purpose and partnership.



Mr. Ekenem Isichei, Deputy Director of Policy, Advocacy and Communications of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and others during a courtesy call to the VP as part of activities of the HCD 2.0 Roundtable

Nigeria's Human Capital Roundtable Charts A Bold Path To Future-Proofing Development

By Majeed Salaam

In the sprawling city of Abuja, where Nigeria's policymaking machinery pulses at its most active, the National Human Capital Development (HCD 2.0) Roundtable convened its latest gathering with a clear sense of urgency—and unmistakable energy. It was a moment of convergence between national ambition, global best practices, and the pressing need to build a resilient, future-proof development ecosystem that places people at the center.

Sitting among a circle of policymakers, technocrats, and development experts, Ms. Rukaiya El-Rufai, Special Adviser to the President on the National Economic Council (NEC) and Climate Change, and National Coordinator of the HCD Program, offered a powerful reflection on the journey so far and the ideas shaping the future. "Wonderful," she began, with a smile that concealed the intensity of the issues being tackled. "I mean, I am sure everyone agrees with me that several themes have been included."

Indeed, the HCD Roundtable has matured over time into a critical national convening, with this edition following three earlier high-level meetings. These included one with Mr. Wale Edun, the Honourable Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister for the Economy, whose insights helped to anchor the government's macroeconomic vision with its human development priorities. Another was the HCD+ session, a key thematic platform that highlighted the national commitment to sustainable investment in people.

What made this most recent roundtable remarkable was how deeply it was embedded in a global and forward-looking context. Many of the participants had just returned from the IMF-World Bank Spring Meetings, where they had engaged with chief economists and international partners on the next generation of human capital indices (HCI). "We were delighted to see the new framework being presented," Ms. El-Rufai recalled, noting how the strategy already reflected amendments shaped by open workshops. "The strategy was created in a way that future-proofing was not just an afterthought—it was central."

The evolving Human Capital Index strategy spans the entire life course—from early childhood development and

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The strategy was created in a way that future-proofing was not just an afterthought—it was central

nutrition all the way to elderly care. According to Ms. El-Rufai, it was imperative that capacity building keep pace with this expanding scope. Governance, data systems, and technology emerged as essential foundations for delivering results at scale. "The Minister echoed strongly the need for capability in data and digitisation of projects," she said, highlighting a clear shift in government thinking—from planning to execution, and from paper to platform.

Yet, the roundtable was not simply a technocratic affair. It was also a space for collective accountability and joint stewardship. Ms. El-Rufai emphasised the role of the Vice President's Office, the HCD Steering Committee, and the Core Working Group as conveners and custodians

of Nigeria's human development vision. "We hold people accountable," she said. "And the discussions we have created are meant to serve as a platform—not just for talk, but for commitment and follow-through."

The conversation also traveled beyond borders. Ms. El-Rufai spoke vividly of her visit to Hertie School in Berlin, a leading institution in public policy. "It was a great school," she noted, sharing her experience from nearly a decade ago when she participated in a digital leadership workshop. It was a formative encounter, she recalled, not only for its content but for its startling predictions—some of which had since become reality. "Even then, HR was telling us emails would disappear, and we would rely more on instant messaging. They talked about shared consultancy teams and integrated digital platforms."

That visit included a memorable encounter with a woman running an entire company with major clients such as Deutsche Banana, yet she was the only full-time staff member. The rest of her work was managed through project-based collaboration. "I was in awe," Ms. El-Rufai admitted. "It just showed what they had told us a few weeks earlier was already happening."

This spirit of innovation and partnership is one Nigeria is now actively embracing. The government's collaboration with institutions like Hertie is driven by mutual confidence and a shared belief that expertise, when rightly harnessed, can transform systems. "They have done it before, worked with several governments," Ms. El-Rufai affirmed. "And we did not even inform them of the topics—they were that prepared."

At its core, the Abuja roundtable was not just about reviewing past achievements or setting future targets—it was about building an ecosystem for transformation. It recognised that HCD is no longer a soloed activity but a dynamic, interdependent venture involving education, health, technology, governance, and economic empowerment.

As the day wound down, participants left not just with policy papers and frameworks, but with a shared sense of purpose. A commitment to act—not later, but now. Because in a country of over 200 million people, the stakes are too high, and the future is too near.

Nigeria HCD 2.0 Charts A Bold Course For Institutional Renewal, Digital Transformation

By Jennete Ugo Anya/ Ibrahim Mujtaba

In a gathering marked by visionary leadership and strategic ambition, stakeholders met at the Federal Ministry of Finance in Abuja ahead of a scheduled roundtable to shape the future of governance in Nigeria.

The meeting, convened under the banner of Human Capital Development Nigeria (HCD 2.0), was not just a prelude to the roundtable—it was an earnest reaffirmation of Nigeria's resolve to strengthen institutions, empower public officials, and reposition the country as a beacon of transformative governance in Africa.

Chaired by the Honourable Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister for the Economy, Mr. Wale Edun, the meeting echoed with a singular message: human capital is the bedrock of national development. With a sense of urgency and optimism, he emphasised the critical importance of institutional strengthening to realise the bold ambitions outlined in Nigeria's 2030 HCD 2.0 Strategy.

"We cannot talk about economic prosperity without addressing the human capital question. Institutions must be the vehicles that carry our people forward," the Honourable Minister asserted.

The meeting attracted international partners including Dr. Rolf Alter from the Hertie School in Berlin and Dr. Bernhard Knoll-Tudor, Director Executive Education of Hertie School, whose contributions highlighted the significance of cross-border learning and capacity building.

Mr. Alter commended Nigeria's efforts in building a national response to the COVID-19 crisis, stating that the country's ability to mobilise and adapt pointed to a deep well of resilience and potential. He called for sustained commitment to transforming this potential into long-term institutional gains.

"Capacity building is not a one-off event," Dr. Knoll-Tudor stated: "It is a continuous journey that requires consistent investment and policy coherence."

Institutional Partnerships and Executive Learning

At the heart of the deliberations was a proposal to identify four to five high-potential public officials from the Ministry of Finance to participate in a prestigious executive training program at the Hertie School in Berlin.

This initiative is designed not only to enrich individual competencies but also to seed a new cadre of reform-minded ambassadors who will champion best practices in public service. "We are not just looking for trainees—we are cultivating a generation of leaders who will drive innovation and accountability," noted a participant.

Plans are already underway to deepen the collaboration between Nigerian institutions and the Berlin-based school, with a focus on key pillars such as sustainable financing for human capital development, digital governance, and data-driven decision making. The goal, as articulated by both sides, is to establish a long-term program that goes beyond certificates and knowledge exchange to build institutional memory and reform capacity.

Philanthropy and Sustainable Transformation

The role of philanthropy featured prominently in the conversation, with stakeholders stressing the need for philanthropic partners to support the creation of a real, sustainable initiative. "The school in Berlin was built on the shoulders of philanthropic vision," said one speaker. "We must rally similar support for Nigeria's human capital journey."



Mr. Wale Edun, Honourable Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy

“We cannot talk about economic prosperity without addressing the human capital question. Institutions must be the vehicles that carry our people forward

From developing digital labs for revenue generation to integrating Enterprise Resource Management Systems (ERMS) across ministries, the speakers outlined ambitious yet necessary projects aimed at digitising government operations. These innovations, they argued, would not only enhance service delivery but also combat corruption and increase transparency in public financial management.

Digital Government: The Next Frontier
Nigeria's journey toward digital transformation was spotlighted as a game-changer in institutional efficiency. The Honourable Minister of Finance highlighted Lagos State's successful digitisation initiatives as a model for nationwide reform, particularly in automating revenue collection and budget

management.

"We have seen the power of digitisation in Lagos. Now, we must scale it nationally, beginning with the most critical area—budget management," the Honourable Minister said.

Ms. Rukaiya El-Rufai, Special Adviser to the President on the National Economic Council (NEC) and Climate Change, and National Coordinator of the HCD Program, reinforced the importance of selecting receptive, data-literate individuals for these programs, stressing the need for a cultural shift within the civil service. "Rational policymaking must be built on the foundation of quality data and a willingness to adapt," she said.

Leadership, Coordination: The Glue for Reform

A recurring theme throughout the meeting was leadership—not only at the helm of ministries but also among rank-and-file officials who must embrace a new mindset. As several speakers pointed out, digital tools and policies will only be as effective as the people behind them.

"Change management is just as important as technology," Mr. Edun explained. "We must invest in people who understand the value of data, quantification, and coordination."

From revenue collection to civil control, participants agreed that the transformation of Nigeria's governance architecture must be anchored in strong leadership and coordinated efforts across all tiers of government. Mr. Alter echoed this sentiment, referencing Germany's success in managing central-state coordination through structured digital frameworks.

Investing in People for a Transformed Nigeria

The meeting settled with a resounding commitment to invest in people—not just through education, but by embedding them in systems that allow them to flourish. As one participant aptly noted, "This is not about ticking boxes. It is about building a new Nigeria, one public servant at a time."

There is no doubt that HCD Nigeria, with the Federal Ministry of Finance at the helm, is charting a bold, strategic course towards a digitally empowered, data-literate, and people-centered public service. Through partnerships, philanthropy, and an unrelenting focus on institutional renewal, the vision of a transformed Nigeria—where governance is efficient, inclusive, and future-ready—is not only imaginable, but attainable.

The road to 2030 is long, but with this kind of foresight and commitment, the future of HCD in Nigeria is not just promising—it is unstoppable.

Nigeria HCD 2.0, NGF Forge Bold Partnership for National Transformation



Dr. Bernhard Knoll – Tudor, Director, Executive Education, Hertie School (7th from left); Dr. Abdulateef Shittu, Director –General (DG) of the NGF (8th from left); Ms. Rukaiya El-Rufai, Special Adviser to the President on the National Economic Council (NEC) and Climate Change, and National Coordinator of the HCD Program (9th from left); Ms. Susan Gosling (10th from left), Hertie School; Dr. Rolf Alter (11th from left), Hertie School, and others during the HCD 2.0 Roundtable in Abuja.

By Jennete Ugo Anya/Ibrahim Mujtaba

In what can only be described as another watershed moment for Nigeria's governance and development agenda, the Core Working Group (CWG) meeting held at the Federal Ministry of Finance ahead of the National Human Capital Development (HCD) Roundtable bore testament to a country that is not just dreaming of change but methodically engineering it.

With the Nigerian Governors' Forum (NGF) at the table and the distinguished Hertie School of Governance from Berlin offering a hand of global partnership, the tone of the meeting was one of optimism, strategic alignment, and an unflinching commitment to building a new generation of governance leaders. And right at the heart of it all—offering leadership, vision, and coordination—stood HCD Nigeria, once again affirming its place as the catalytic engine powering Nigeria's future.

The NGF: A Platform for Real Change

Dr. Abdulateef Shittu, Director –General (DG) of the NGF, opened the session with clarity and purpose. Describing the NGF as a non-partisan coalition of democratically elected state governors, he reiterated the forum's unique role in shaping Nigeria's development trajectory. The NGF, he explained, is not merely a bureaucratic body—it is a platform of action, consensus, and impact. From education and health to agriculture, gender equity, and public financial management, the NGF has evolved into a credible voice of subnational governance.

"We believe that human capital development is the currency of national growth, and governors across Nigeria are fully committed to this agenda," the DG declared to enthusiastic agreement.

A Visionary Collaboration with the Hertie School

The Hertie School, represented by Dr. Bernhard Knoll-Tudor, Director Executive Education, presented a proposal highlighting thus: "Our proposal to Nigeria and development partners is aligned with Nigeria's HCD 2.0 and the investment

priorities of partners like ECOWAS, GIZ and the Gates Foundation.

Specifically Hertie School proposes a 36-months partnership to strengthen the national and subnational policy delivery systems for human development capital initiatives; build institutional capacities for digital governance and data-driven decision-making; support the creation of sustainable public finance practices including public-private partnerships and effective monitoring; expand entrepreneurship education to drive employment and economic resilience; and enhance monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning (MEAL) frameworks to ensure measurable outcomes.

Investment by development partners, according to him, will maximise the reach, scalability and sustainability of these initiatives.

The Scalable Engagement Formats, he said, are executive trainings (in Berlin and Abuja) for public sector innovators, modular certificate programmes targeting leadership in governance, finance & digital transformation, policy advisory support to key agencies under the NEC and HCD Secretariat, and monitoring and evaluation systems, KPI tracking, and reporting tools.

Speaking further, Dr. Alter also stated that the Strategic Value for Development Partners are alignment with HCD 2.0 crosscutting themes: digital economy, sustainability, inclusion; high return on

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Some directors of NGF with development partners during a visit to the NGF by participants of the HCD 2.0 Roundtable.

Nigeria HCD 2.0, NGF Forge Bold Partnership for National Transformation

CONT'D FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

development investment through capacity-building and systems change; accelerated achievement of SDG-linked targets, especially education, health, and decent work; transparency and measurable impact through robust M&E systems and KPI dashboards; and leveraging of existing HCD structures to ensure sustainable outcomes beyond 2030.”

Dr. Knoll-Tudor emphasised the need for evidence-based policies and forward-thinking governance models, stressing that the Hertie School was proud to walk with Nigeria on this transformative path.

“This partnership is not about quick wins. It is about building a resilient future, rooted in digital innovation, gender equity, and inclusive leadership,” he said.

Empowering Women, Bridging Digital Gaps

One of the most powerful aspects of the meeting was the deliberate emphasis on digital literacy and gender inclusion. The NGF team made it clear that no true development could happen unless women and girls were empowered to lead in the digital economy. The current gender gap in digital literacy, particularly in rural and underserved regions, was acknowledged as a national challenge that must be tackled head-on.

“If we want sustainable progress, we must deliberately build the capacity of women—not just as beneficiaries but as leaders, innovators, and policymakers,” one NGF official stated.

This alignment between the NGF and Nigeria HCD 2.0 on gender inclusion and



One of the most powerful aspects of the meeting was the deliberate emphasis on digital literacy and gender inclusion

equity in public administration is a powerful signal of a country preparing to unleash the full potential of its people—all of its people.

Concrete Action: Building the Nigeria We Want

This was not a talk shop. The meeting produced a clear set of action items that signal a new phase of implementation and results. Among the most significant is the exploration of a co-financed pilot project, potentially starting in 2026, to demonstrate proof of concept and generate momentum across the states.

The pilot would focus on:

- Leadership development and

induction programs for new appointees through the NGF Academy;

- Entrepreneurship and policy innovation training, leveraging the Hertie School’s expertise;

- Digital governance systems, which are foundational to efficient service delivery and public trust.

“We are not just designing policies. We are building the capacity of those who will bring those policies to life,” noted another participant from the NGF.

Institutionalising Capacity for Generational Impact

Perhaps one of the most far-sighted outcomes of the session was the commitment

to institutionalising capacity building. Nigeria’s challenge has never been a lack of plans—it has been the lack of enduring structures to sustain those plans. In aligning the Hertie School partnership with the NGF’s ongoing initiatives such as the Nigeria Education Forum, the stakeholders demonstrated a strategic understanding of scale, synergy, and sustainability.

This institutional approach is precisely what HCD Nigeria has championed from day one: Do not just train people—build institutions. Do not just respond—transform.

A Proud Moment for HCD Nigeria

It must be said—and said boldly—that HCD Nigeria has once again proven to be the moral compass and intellectual engine of Nigeria’s development conversation. In creating the enabling platform for this high-level convergence of subnational leaders and global development partners, HCD Nigeria has shown that vision without execution is hallucination—and execution without coordination is chaos.

Under its guidance, Nigeria’s governors are not only talking the talk; they are walking the walk toward a future where digital governance is a norm, not an exception; where women lead at all levels of government; and where every public official is equipped not just with passion, but with the tools to perform.

As the CWG rose from the table, the message was clear: Nigeria is not waiting to be rescued. It is investing in its people, its leaders, and its future. And in the driver’s seat, unwavering and unrelenting, is Nigeria HCD 2.0—the quiet architect of a national renaissance.

Indeed, if nation-building were a relay, HCD Nigeria is both the starter and the pacemaker. And with this kind of clarity, collaboration, and commitment, there is little doubt that the baton will be passed to a generation fully equipped to run—and win—the race of development.

NGF Academy, Hertie School Partnership – A New Era In Human Capital Development

By Kingsley Benson

In a remarkable show of foresight, coordination, and ambition, the Nigerian Governors' Forum (NGF), under the inspiring leadership of Dr. Abdulateef Shittu, Director -General (DG), has unveiled yet another strategic milestone in the nation's journey toward transformational governance: the formal establishment of the NGF Academy and Learning Center. This groundbreaking institution is not just a new addition to Nigeria's public sector reform infrastructure—it is a powerful symbol of intent, an institutional affirmation that Nigeria is ready to invest in the minds that will shape its future.

The Academy, as proudly introduced by the DG, is conceived as a robust capacity-building platform for public service leadership at the sub-national level. It promises structured training, deep technical support, and immersive experiential learning for policymakers, senior civil servants, and reform champions across Nigeria's thirty-six states. The intention is clear: build a cadre of leaders who are not just politically appointed but professionally prepared—technocrats with the heart of patriots and the skill of reformers.

What makes this moment even more compelling is the timely visit from the Hertie School of Governance, one of Europe's most respected institutions in executive education and policy leadership. The delegation—comprised of the brilliant Dr. Rolf Alter, the insightful Dr. Bernhard Knoll-Tudor, Director Executive Education, and Miss Susan Gosling—brought with them not only the credentials of academic excellence but also the humility and commitment to partner with Nigeria on this noble journey.

Ms. Rukaiya El-Rufai, Special Adviser to the President on the National Economic Council (NEC) and Climate Change, and National Coordinator of the HCD Program, representing the NGF, extended a warm and thoughtful welcome to the Hertie School team, articulating the immense value their presence brings. Their collective expertise in international partnerships, educational program management across Africa, and executive training is exactly the kind of resourcefulness Nigeria needs at this critical juncture. The proposed partnership between the NGF Academy and the Hertie School is nothing short of transformational—it promises to redefine the standards of leadership training, policy innovation, and digital governance in Nigeria.

The NGF DG, a respected statesman and visionary, took the time to personally introduce his capable team—including the Director of Legal Regulation, the Head of Gender, the CEO of the NGF, and several others—each of whom carries an area of expertise essential to the success of the HCD Strategy. Their presence and thoughtful contributions demonstrated that the NGF is not just a forum—it is a well-oiled engine of reform, ready to translate strategy into action.

Dr. Knoll-Tudor expressed heartfelt gratitude for the invitation and presented the School's distinctive approach to international law, development assistance, and public leadership. With sincere enthusiasm, he outlined a compelling 36-month partnership plan that aligns seamlessly with Nigeria's HCD Strategy 2.0. The Hertie School is offering not just lectures and seminars—but full-spectrum capacity support, including



L-R: Dr. Bernhard Knoll – Tudor, Director, Executive Education, Hertie School; Dr. Abdulateef Shittu, Director –General (DG) of the NGF; Ms. Susan Gosling, Hertie School; Dr. Rolf Alter, Hertie School, during the HCD 2.0 Roundtable.

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But beyond the technicalities, the conversation struck an emotional chord when Speaker after Speaker emphasised the need to build capacity with intentionality...

technical assistance in policy design, implementation, digital infrastructure development, and sustainable finance modeling.

As the room absorbed the depth of this proposal, it became evident that this partnership is not about cosmetic reform. It is about strengthening systems, skills, and structures—the trifecta needed to transform Nigeria from potential to performance. Dr. Alter further elaborated on the opportunity to launch a co-financed pilot project, a bold initiative that will demonstrate success early, generate momentum, and inspire replication across states.

But beyond the technicalities, the conversation struck an emotional chord when Speaker after Speaker emphasised the need to build capacity with intentionality, especially in the often-overlooked sectors of women and youth leadership.

According to other participants, the existing digital literacy gap between men and women—urge that this is not merely a

developmental challenge, but a justice issue. The NGF, supported by the Hertie School, must make it a national priority to empower women to lead—not from the sidelines, but from the frontlines of governance and innovation.

Equally poignant was the repeated call for institutionalising capacity-building, not as an event, but as a process.

Also need for digital capacity to enable better social communication and service delivery. The NGF was encouraged to champion this cause—not only to guide the Hertie partnership but to embed learning and knowledge-sharing as a core part of Nigeria's governance DNA.

The emphasis on Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) brought another layer of urgency to the discussion. Nigeria's future rests on its ability to adopt, deploy, and manage digital tools that drive service delivery, fiscal transparency, and citizen engagement. Detailing the NGF's ongoing work in this area and welcomed Hertie's

potential contributions to strengthening digital infrastructure, data literacy, and governance systems.

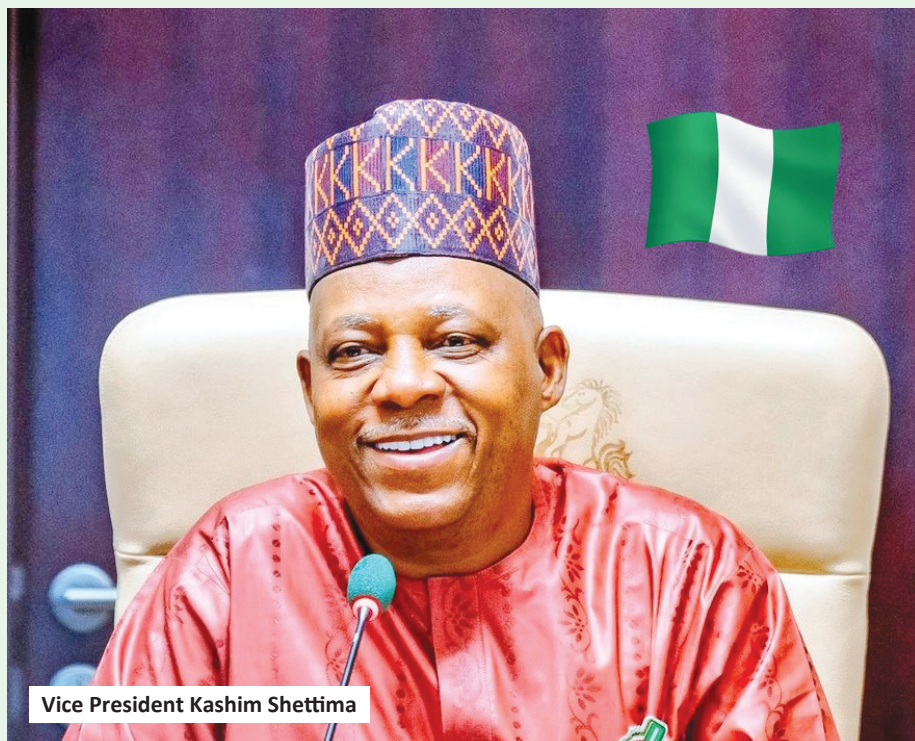
Throughout the session, the theme of empowering young people kept returning. The NGF Academy, it was said, must serve as a launchpad for a generation of young Nigerians hungry for purpose, training, and opportunity. This is not about tokenism—it is about preparing a young vanguard that will carry Nigeria into a new era of productivity, creativity, and civic pride. The call for synergy with the education sector, particularly around employability and entrepreneurship, highlighted the need for a whole-of-society approach.

The meeting drew to a close, the DG once again took the floor—not with ceremony, but with heartfelt appreciation. He commended the Hertie delegation for their vision and expressed deep optimism about the potential ahead. The NGF Academy, he affirmed, is not just a project—it is a movement, and the collaboration with the Hertie School will give it wings. From digital governance and entrepreneurship to policy innovation and reform acceleration, this partnership will mark a new chapter in how Nigeria develops its most precious asset—its people.

The meeting ended not with bureaucracy, but with a sense of shared purpose and patriotic pride. There was a commitment in the air—a solemn understanding that this is the time, and these are the actors, to build a country we can all be proud of. With HCD Nigeria providing strategic coordination, and the NGF leading from the front, Nigeria is proving that human capital development is not just a slogan—it is a national mission.

Indeed, history will remember this moment not just as another meeting, but as the point where Nigeria decisively chose to invest in minds, empower leaders, and institutionalise excellence. And as always, it is HCD Nigeria lighting the path forward—with boldness, brilliance, and unwavering belief in Nigeria's destiny.

Nigeria Is Poised To Unlock Full Potential Across Africa — VP Shettima



Vice President Kashim Shettima

By Anita Dennis

The Vice President of Nigeria, His Excellency Kashim Shettima, has reaffirmed Nigeria's commitment to unlocking the full potential of its human and natural resources to become a leading force on the African continent. He gave the assurance recently while receiving a delegation from the Hertie School of Governance, Berlin, Germany led by Senior Fellow Rolf Alter, at the Presidential Villa in Abuja.

Reiterating the administration's focus on upskilling the population, the Vice President noted that skills development is central to the success of the Human Capital Development (HCD) 2.0 program.

Also speaking, Ms. Rukaiya El-Rufai, Special Adviser to the President on the National Economic Council (NEC) and Climate Change, and National Coordinator of the HCD Program, said: "The strategy is there for states to adopt and implement. What is needed now is support for the implementers—including states,



Nigeria has actively been engaging global institutions to enhance policy formulation and implementation—especially in the area of human capital development

Nigeria has actively been engaging global institutions to enhance policy formulation and implementation—especially in the area of human capital development.

Describing the German institute as a valuable partner in this journey, Vice President Shettima emphasised the importance of collaboration: "No matter how well a political plan is crafted, its success lies in implementation. I want to assure you that the current crop of leadership in Nigeria, under President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, is ready and willing to unleash the full potential of our nation on the African continent."

He called for a warm and robust partnership between Germany and Nigeria, particularly in capacity building and technical cooperation.

ministries, departments, and agencies—through coordinated collaboration and capacity building."

Responding, Dr. Rolf Alter of the Hertie School said: "We will focus on entrepreneurship—because entrepreneurship means jobs, employment, income, and widespread benefit. We are ready to support Nigeria in accelerating implementation."

The German delegation commended President Tinubu's administration on the launch and initial implementation of the HCD strategy, describing it as both ambitious and targeted at improving the quality of life for all Nigerians.

The delegation pledged to work closely with authorities across various levels to develop programs tailored to Nigeria's unique developmental needs.

NGF, Hertie School, Africa HCD+ Align To Drive Nigeria's Human Capital Development



Mr. Wale Edun, Honourable Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy

By Jennete Ugo Anya

In the resonant echo of purposeful collaboration, a meaningful virtual exchange unfolded recently between Madam Finda Koroma, former Vice President of the ECOWAS Commission and now Chief Executive Officer of Africa HCD+, and the visiting delegation from the Hertie School in Berlin, hosted by the Office of the Vice President of Nigeria. It was a meeting not just of minds, but of deep-rooted intent to transform leadership, elevate capacity, and drive results across Nigeria's human capital development (HCD) agenda.

Introduced with heartfelt warmth by Ms. Rukaiya El-Rufai, Special Adviser to the President on the National Economic Council (NEC) and Climate Change, and National Coordinator of the HCD Program, Madam Koroma was lauded as a steady ally and one of the earliest believers in the HCD vision. During her time at ECOWAS, her leadership was crucial in galvanising funding and political will to support a coordinated development agenda. Today, that vision continues to find expression through the states, anchored by frameworks developed with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates and Aliko Dangote Foundations.

Ms. El-Rufai presented her team: Dr. Igwe, the Technical Adviser to the NEC; Sarah Sambo, Core advocate of the HCD programme, among others. Each member symbolized the constellation of support that now orbits the HCD initiative—a clear signal that Nigeria is committed to building its most valuable asset: people.

On the other end of the digital aisle, Dr. Bernhard Knoll-Tudor, Director Executive Education, representing the Hertie School, acknowledged the painstaking efforts that brought the dialogue to fruition. With his words came a sense of continuity, of a conversation that had long been in motion. He highlighted the multi-angled nature of the proposed collaboration—from public sector leadership development to digital governance, data literacy, entrepreneurship education, and policy innovation. He handed the baton to his colleague, Miss Susan Gosling, whose energy and professionalism had already helped craft similar partnerships in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Moldova.

Miss Gosling's intervention was grounded, optimistic, and forward-looking. She emphasised the Hertie School's readiness to support capacity building tailored for policy decision-makers. Their earlier meeting with Honourable Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Mr. Wale Edun, she noted, was met with strong alignment. The Honourable Minister echoed the urgency of embedding data-driven practices in public governance,

a principle that sits at the very heart of the Hertie School's philosophy.

And then came Dr. Rolf Alter, Hertie School Delegate—a seasoned partner, whose voice carried the kind of credibility only lived experience can offer. For him, data is not a buzzword; it is the bedrock of effective governance. He articulated with quiet conviction the critical need for governments, especially in resource-tight environments, to invest not only in digital infrastructure but also in people. "Investment in people," he stressed, "is the key to institutional success."

Dr. Alter drew attention to a universal challenge: translating data into policy, and then into tangible delivery. He celebrated the public servants who are "willing and eager to learn, and to take responsibility for what they do"—those who could become ambassadors of change after experiencing the Hertie School's executive training.

Madam Koroma nodded in agreement. Though participating virtually, her presence filled the digital room. She represents the bridge between continental aspirations and local actions. As CEO of Africa HCD+, she remains one of the continent's loudest advocates for inclusive development, youth empowerment, and gender parity in leadership. Her role in this alliance will no doubt be catalytic, ensuring the conversation transitions swiftly into measurable outcomes.

What this meeting symbolised, more than anything, was a convergence of vision. The NGF Academy and Learning Center, recently announced as a capacity-building hub for state-level public service leaders, will benefit immensely from the pedigree and precision of the Hertie School. And with Africa HCD+ on board, the potential for knowledge sharing, program sustainability, and inclusive development only multiplies.

In an era where institutions are under pressure to perform and citizens are rightfully demanding better, this partnership feels both timely and necessary. It is no longer enough to hope that policies will work; leaders must be equipped to design them, empowered to implement them, and supported to sustain them.

Nigeria, through the NGF Academy, has made a decisive step. The Hertie School offers the scaffolding, the scholarship, and the systems thinking. And with allies like Africa HCD+, the vision of a data-driven, youth-inclusive, digitally enabled governance ecosystem is no longer a distant dream—it is an agenda within reach.

As Dr. Rolf so aptly put it, when people leave Hertie, they do not just return with certificates—they return as ambassadors of reform. That, perhaps, is the truest measure of success in this unfolding story of purpose, partnership, and progress.

PHOTO NEWS

Mr. Ekenem Isichei, Deputy Director of Policy, Advocacy and Communications at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, making explanation to others during a visit to the office of the Foundation in Abuja.



PHOTO NEWS



Dr. Rolf Alter of the Hertie Business school during his presentation at the HCD 2.0 Partners Roundtable.



Vice President Kasim Shettima (m right) in agbada; Dr. Rolf Alter (l), of the Hertie of School, and other development partners, during a visit to the Vice President at the State House in Abuja.

Thursday, 8th May, 2025

Human Capital At The Core — Nigeria's Bold Bet On People, Digital Governance

In a world increasingly defined by rapid technological advancement, institutional complexity, and a fierce contest for human talent, Nigeria may have just turned a significant corner. The recent Core Working Group (CWG) meeting, led by Senator Ibrahim Hassan Hadejia, at the Federal Ministry of Finance ahead of the National Human Capital Development (HCD) Roundtable is more than another policy talkshop—it is a blueprint in motion, a declaration of intent, and a striking signal that Nigeria is preparing for the future with serious, strategic purpose.

At the confluence of stakeholders that included the Nigerian Governors' Forum (NGF), international partners from the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin, and federal policy architects led by the Ministry of Finance, the meeting illuminated one central idea: Nigeria's transformation will be people-powered or not at all.

What unfolded at the meeting was not mere rhetoric—it was an orchestrated push towards a development paradigm where citizens are not passive beneficiaries but central actors. The conversation went beyond investing in education or skills training; it focused on embedding people in systems that empower them to solve problems, deliver services, and govern with integrity.

A new ethos is taking root in Nigeria's civil service—one that recognises that competent, digitally savvy, and motivated public servants are not luxuries but prerequisites for national development. This vision is championed by HCD Nigeria, which continues to emerge as a catalytic force, orchestrating partnerships and programs that treat human capital not as a cost, but as the highest-yielding national investment.

As one attendee put it, "This is not about ticking boxes. It is about building a new Nigeria, one public servant at a time." These are not empty words—they are an urgent imperative.

Digital governance, long spoken of as the next frontier, is now being practically embraced. Mr. Wale Edun, the Honourable Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, pointed to Lagos State's pioneering work in automating revenue collection and digitising budget processes. The results are not abstract; they are measurable, visible, and replicable.

The lesson is clear: Nigeria does not lack capacity—it needs coordinated

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replication and the political will to scale success stories. The call to nationalise such digital reforms—starting with budget management—is not only timely but necessary. In an era where transparency, agility, and real-time responsiveness are demanded of governments, digital governance is not a convenience; it is a civic duty.

But as several leaders wisely noted, technology without capable people is a hollow promise. Tools are only as effective as the hands that wield them. This is why the emphasis on data-literate, reform-minded civil servants is not just commendable—it is non-negotiable.

Ms. Rukaiya El-Rufai, Special Adviser to the President on NEC and

This vision is championed by HCD Nigeria, which continues to emerge as a catalytic force, orchestrating partnerships and programs that treat human capital not as a cost, but as the highest-yielding national investment

Climate Change and the National Coordinator of the HCD Programme, highlighted what may be the most difficult part of the reform agenda: a cultural shift within the civil service. Rational policymaking must rise from the bedrock of quality data and flexible mindsets, she emphasised.

This demands more than training sessions. It calls for a reinvention of how government works and who it works for. It means redefining leadership not as positional authority, but as capacity to adapt, coordinate, and deliver.

This is where the meeting's most powerful consensus emerged: leadership and coordination are the true glue of reform. Whether in revenue generation, public finance, healthcare delivery, or climate adaptation, Nigeria's success will depend on how well its institutions—federal, state, and local—work together, guided by vision and held accountable by performance metrics.

Drawing inspiration from Germany's central-state digital coordination architecture, participants reaffirmed the importance of policy coherence and execution discipline. Nigeria does not need to reinvent the wheel, but it must customise global best practices to its federal and socio-political realities.

Mr. Edun's remarks about "change management being as important as technology" resonate with particular force. It is not enough to digitise; we must humanise governance, by putting the right people in the right systems, with the right incentives to serve.

With just five years left to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) finish line in 2030, the stakes for Nigeria's future could not be higher. But if the spirit and substance of this CWG meeting are anything to go by, the momentum is building—and it is irreversible.

Yes, the road is long. Yes, systemic reform is hard. But Nigeria is choosing the harder right over the easier wrong. And that—more than any policy document or foreign loan—is the true marker of a nation on the rise.

In a continent still too often plagued by inertia and implementation fatigue, Nigeria with the HCD 2.0 is engineering change—not waiting for it.

This is not just a meeting report. It is a national wake-up call. One that says the real oil of Nigeria is no longer under the ground—but in its people. And finally, it appears, we are ready to refine them.