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PROFESSOR INNOCENT ACHANYA
OTOBO UJAH, mni, OON:

VICE CHANCELLOR OF THE YEAR

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FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF HEALTH SCIENCES TEACHING HOSPITAL
OTUKPO , (FUHSTHO), BENUE STATE
P.M.B. 1960, OTUKPO

GOODWILL MESSAGE

Professor Innocent A. O. Ujah, mni, oon, npom
Vice Chancellor, FUHSO



Sir, accept my congratulations on the Award of Best Vice Chancellor of Universities of Health/Medical Sciences in Nigeria category of the African Health and Medical Service Awards Nigeria, AHMSAN 2024.

Considering the scholastic rigour and ardour with which you tackle assignments to achieve results, this honour of great distinction and recognition does not come to me as a surprise at all.

Buoyed by the successes you have achieved and in the recognition of the challenges faced by the university, I can affirm that this award is a pedestal for you to get to your vision of maximum impact on humanity.



Professor Silas Ochejele
Ag. Chief Medical Director

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-PROFESSOR INNOCENT UJAH, mni, OON, VICE CHANCELLOR

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Professor Innocent Achanya Otobo Uja, mni, OON, NPOM, Vice Chancellor of the Federal University of Health Sciences, Otuokpo (FUHSO), is the biggest honoree of the 2024 African Health and Medical Service Awards Nigeria, AHMSAN, who is bestowed with the Vice Chancellor of the Year, Universities of Health/Medical Sciences in Nigeria.

As part of plans and preparations for the AHMSAN event and the special edition of our widely sought after title, the AfricanStride International magazine in your hands, our team visited Otuokpo, Benue State twice between April and May, 2024. Our first visit could not actualize our purpose owing to Professor Ujah's extreme tight schedules as well as his initial reluctance to the idea of this project. However, after much pressure and unyielding determination to have this erudite African scholar and medical professional of international acclaim honored for his transformational leadership and exemplary judicious utilization of very scarce resources to achieve great milestones as pioneer vice chancellor of the nascent institution, he gave in and our team made a second trip to Otuokpo for a media coverage and interview.

The results of our visit formed the basic contents of this edition. Professor Ujah is an uncommon leader, a trailblazer and a pacesetter. Above all, he is a workaholic and a compulsive networker who finds the means to succeed out of every difficult situation. The achievements he has recorded in FUHSO in barely four years of pioneering its leadership in the face of very scarce resources and sundry challenges is worth over 40 years of any conventional university's life in Nigeria.

This edition also encompasses a focus on Nigeria's Tertiary Education Trust Fund, TETFund, under the Executive Secretaryship of Arc. Sonny Echono, who was appointed in March 2022. The growing importance of TETFund as the livewire of Nigeria's tertiary education necessitated this focus and Arc. Echono is alarmingly proving naysayers wrong in his determined strides at funding institutions in Nigeria to rival their global counterparts. You may please enjoy the reading!



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TETFUND UNDER ARC. SONNY ECHONO: A REVOLUTION IN TERTIARY EDUCATION FUNDING IN NIGERIA

By: Henry Adesola

Nigeria is in the league of poor and underdeveloped countries of the world, and pundits have often been quick to point out that one of the factors responsible for the country's developmental woes is the poor standards of her educational system. No nation, experts argue, can be better than the quality of its education.

There is no more convincing proof of this saying than the fact that global ratings or rankings of universities have often seen the topmost 500 emerge from the most economically advanced climes of Europe, America and recently Asia, with only very few universities from African countries like South Africa and Egypt. No Nigerian university ever made the list of top 1000 universities in the world and a few struggle to be named in the list of the top 500 in Africa, far behind their counterparts in South Africa, Egypt, Tanzania, Morocco and Tunisia.

In a move to arrest the rot in the education sector, the Education Tax Act No7 of 1993 was promulgated, alongside other education-related Decrees in January 1993. The ETF established by the Act No7 of 1993 was however amended by Act No 40 of 1998 (which was replaced by the Tertiary Education Trust Fund Act No 16 of 2011). The new Act therefore refocuses the mandate of the Fund as an

intervention agency set up to provide critical supports to all levels of public tertiary institutions with the main objective of using funding alongside project management for the rehabilitation, restoration and consolidation of Tertiary Education in Nigeria.

The initial source of income available to the Fund is the 2 percent education tax paid from the assessable profit of companies registered in Nigeria. However, the Tax was reviewed upwards to 2.5 percent by the Finance Act 2021 and further increased to 3 percent by the Finance Act 2023, effective September 2023. The funds are disbursed for the general improvement of education in federal and state tertiary educational institutions specifically for the provision or maintenance of: essential physical infrastructure for teaching and learning; institutional material and equipment; research and publications; academic staff training and development and; any other need which, in the opinion of the Board of Trustees, is critical and essential for the improvement and maintenance of standards in higher educational institutions.

The Fund is managed by an eleven-member board of trustees while its day to day management is entrusted in the hands of an Executive Secretary as the Chief Executive Officer, CEO. Over the years, the agency has been led by some of the best minds and brains in the country among the top educational brass, managers and technocrats as Executive Secretaries. Some of these are: Professor Mahmood Yakubu, the current two-term Chairman of the Independent National Electoral

Commission, INEC; Aliyu Naiya, who led the agency in acting capacity; Mallam Tijani Ahmed Abdukadir; Dr. Abdullahi Baffa and; Professor Suleiman Elias Bogoro. But on March 2, 2022, however, former President Muhammadu Buhari appointed a seasoned technocrat, Arc. Sonny Echono as Executive Secretary of the Fund.

If the TETFund had been thought to have made any significant impacts and thus basking in the euphoria of its past achievements, the coming of Echono has been challenging the status-quo and redefining the mission and purpose of the agency in line with the very critical reforms of the new administration of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

Sunday Sylvia Togo Echono, OON, born on 16 December, 1962, is an Architect by training, who previously served as the Secretary of the Admissions Committee of the Nigerian Institute of Architects and the 28th President of the Nigerian Institute of Architects from 2019 to 2021. He served as the Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Agriculture from 2014 to 2016; Federal Ministry of Communications from 2016 to 2017 and; Federal Ministry of Education from 2017 until his retirement in 2022. He therefore came brimming with technocratic expertise and experience, having worked in the highest rung of the bureaucratic system in Nigeria. In the last two years of his leadership of the Fund, Arc. Sonny Echono can be implicated for massive revolution in the agency's activities and operations; bringing significant transformations across the nation's tertiary education landscape. Arc. Echono has prioritized infrastructure development, equitable access, content creation, research, innovation and more importantly, accountability and plugging of leakages in the system.

Poised to reconstruct a new narrative, Arc. Echono's commitment on improving physical infrastructure, thus creating an inspiring environment for learning as well as promoting research, has led to ground breaking researches and innovations such as the "Chord Hearing Device." The ES has led TETFund to forge strategic partnerships with world class institutions such as the University of Brazil, for the training of Nigerian professionals in Agriculture, secured transnational cooperation with the government of Britain, Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa, Nigerian Economic Summit Group and the African Union in areas of research and collaboration geared towards the growth and development of tertiary education in Nigeria.

In addition to these, Echono's TETFund initiated the Digitalization Project Steering and Coordinating Committee, a remarkable effort aimed at creating a vital national research bank. The ambitious endeavor will ensure the establishment of a comprehensive repository for academic works, thus enhancing access to valuable research resources. By embarking on the project, the TETFund under Echono has



demonstrated commitment to embracing technological innovation with a view to streamlining academic processes and enhance knowledge sharing. But beyond building physical infrastructure, training and developing staff capacity, one of the greatest revolution of the Echono-led TETFund in the annals of the Nigerian tertiary institutions will most likely be its efforts at building employable graduates and helping fresh graduates secure jobs as a way of addressing mass youth unemployment in the country. The agency has committed to this initiative by implementing the recommendations from its Graduate Employability Benchmark programme conducted in partnership with the International Finance Corporation, IFC, to reduce unemployment in Nigeria.

This initiative was motivated by the report of the IFC on Nigerian educational institutions, which showed that the aggregate average score of Nigerian benchmark institutions across the five dimensions of employability which includes: relevance of learning, governance and strategy, employer engagement, career services/guidance and, alumni management stood at 2.3 out of 4.0. This means a little above 2.2 which represents the average of institutions benchmarked globally. It is indeed, a deliberate effort at refocusing its intervention schemes by the Fund to support learning outcomes and employability of Nigerian graduates. The initiative came on the heels of an approval by the Federal Ministry of Education of a strategic operation plan to refocus TETFund entrepreneurship intervention for employability and innovation. What Nigerians and key stakeholders in the education industry therefore need to do is to provide needed support for Echono to do more and better. He appears to have more in his kitty and beaming with so much energy, zeal and capacity to take the still underdeveloped educational system to a place of pride. President Bola Tinubu and his Minister of Education, Professor Tahir Mamman, should also explore options of a better and increased funds for the agency, while Arc. Sonny Echono and his team at TETFund must ensure equitable access for a holistic transformation of the vital education sector in Nigeria.

FUHSO:

HOW OTUKPO LANDS ON THE GLOBAL STAGE

By: Adams Oche

Bongos Ikwue is a Nigerian singer and song writer born on 6th of June, 1942 in Otukpo, Benue State. Undoubtedly, Bongos' remarkable waves in the music world put him in the pantheons of Nigeria's legendary musical idols that led and chatted the path now being walked by the new breed song artists as typified by Innocent Ujah Idibia (popularly known as 2Baba), OD Woods, Tay inar, Slikk, Francis Atela, Magnito, Boibusta, Rapizo, Blackface, Terry G and Berry tga among a host of others.

However, in the narrative of the berth of the Federal University of Health Sciences, Otukpo (FUHSO), Bongos Ikwue's songs and musical entrepreneurship may have had some fundamental implications and interconnections. In one of his many songs, titled: "still searching" Bongos moved the soul of his listeners and fans to appreciating the enormity it entails to achieving success or to finding a good thing. Lyrically woven on the common subject of love, it's distinction with regards to the difficulties associated with coming by a good thing cannot be mistaken:

"I have been searching, for true love,
I gat to keep right on searching till I find,
Nothing good comes easy, this I know,
I gat to keep right searching, till I find,
I'm going to keep right on searching, till I find."

The eventual establishment of FUHSO, thus bringing Otukpo, the heartland of the Idomas of Benue State on the global stage, was the product of ceaseless searching, lobbying, negotiation, toiling and dedication – which sync with Bongos' submission in that "nothing good comes easy....". Located at some 100 kilometers away from Makurdi and occupying the southern part of the middle belt state of Benue, Otukpo is the headquarters of all Idoma speaking people and the coming of the FUHSO was a major insignia of recompense for the peaceful but resilient people of Idoma nation.

Africa's history is replete with stories of migrations, wars, conquest and survival and the Idoma people are not different from the pack. However, although extremely disadvantaged by population and size, the people's resilience, courage, stoicism and bravery in the face of the toughest battles have enabled them to survive at every bend and sharp corner of their struggles and developmental progressions. History reveals that from as far back as the 15th century, the forebears of the tribe migrated from Apa (known as *Kwararafa kingdom*) on account of wars of hegemony which threatened to extinguish their existence and eclipse its ancestry. Thus, the people were uprooted from Apa or *Kwararafa kingdom*, where they had co-habited with their erstwhile Jukun and Tiv brothers, among others, to chart their own course and to find their paths for the fuller expression of their individual and collective



Main Gate, GRA Campus

PROFILE

historic dreams and aspirations.

Hence, they were said to have hit their migration march on their ginger feet far from *Kwararafa* due to their sparse population size and were said to be the first to have arrived and settled around the northern and southern shores of the River Benue. Upon their arrival and settlement, they re-enacted their cherished Apa kingdom which was once lost with the disintegration of *Kwararafa*. In no time however, their extreme hospitality and humanity to fellow men as entrenched in their culture, would make them embrace their Tiv brothers who later arrived at the same river bank. Again, with time, bloody contest for space and limited resources as well as population disadvantage would make them flee from the place they had thought was their final abode and moved South-East and South-West of Nigeria.

The lessons learned from their erstwhile neighbors served them useful experiences in their initial encounter with the Igala people to the West, making them to beat a hasty retreat at the earliest suspicion of distrust. It was with enormous sacrifices; bitter-bloody encounters – claiming lives, body parts and belongings- that the people were able to keep their present homestead secured and inhabited while preserving their values and well-bred cultures: which include hospitality, peace-loving, hardworking, education, industry, resilience, humanity and accommodation. Extremely committed to learning which they view as power, Idomas with a relatively compact population boast of over 500 professors today, who are making spectacular marks in their various fields and many having left indelible imprints in and out of the ivory towers across Nigeria, of which Professor Innocent Achanya Otobo Ujah, mni, OON, the pioneering Vice Chancellor of FUHSO, who has bestirred the medical

and health system of Nigeria like an octopus for over four decades, is one.

Still today, the Idoma people face serious challenges of political annihilation and they are about the most vanquished ethnic nationalities in Nigeria on account of poorly and deliberately configured numerically dependent democratic leadership struggles in their home state. The joy of the people can therefore only be imagined when the Federal Government of Nigeria announced the establishment of the first full-fledged university of medical sciences in Otukpo on 20th May, 2015, signaling its readiness to launch a medical and health training and research institution from the skylines of the Idoma nation; fully imbued to impact illuminating rays of medical and health knowledge on younger Africans and the world. But the immediate joy occasioned by the announcement was to be short-lived until, after the resilience of the people came to play, and it was restored in 2019.

Every institution or society has its founding fathers and so does the new and first bride in Nigeria's medical and health sciences training and research ivory towers established in Otukpo, Benue State - the FUHSO. For one, it can be said that at no time in the history of Nigeria was more attention given to establishing new higher institutions of learning in the country like the years of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, who governed Nigeria from 2010-May, 2015. The Jonathan institutional establishment campaign was probably hinged on two main factors viz; to balance and extend development to every part and region of Nigeria and; to grant educational access to young school leavers, who in their millions annually, were facing severe difficulties at securing admissions into the country's pre-existing but very limited institutions. Dr. Goodluck Jonathan himself, having hailed from Otuke in



Faculty of Science, GRA Campus



Lecture Theatre Complex, Otada Campus



Students' Hostel, Otada Campus



Front View of Judith Ogwa Obla Memorial Kidney Centre, FUHSTHO

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Inside Anatomy Laboratory, Otada Campus



Lecture Room at Otada Campus

Bayelsa State, one of the extreme minorities of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, must have seen firsthand, the neglect, underdevelopment and educational disadvantages of regions and states with no higher institutions, especially federal or state owned institutions.

Hence, his first step upon inauguration as president in 2010 was the establishment of 9 federal universities in regions which hitherto had no federal universities or higher institutions and where a region already had one or more universities or higher institutions, the newly founded federal university was taken to a state in the region that had not got such privilege. That done, the Jonathan administration moved to establishing specialized universities; at the same time, some colleges of education, polytechnics and monotechnics were upgraded to universities – it was all in all, a period of revolution in the higher educational advancement of Nigeria!

Under the Yar'Adua/Jonathan administration that lasted from 2007 to 2015 (with Jonathan taking over after the death of Yar'Adua in 2010 and going on to secure victory at the polls in 2011 as president), Senator David Bonaventure Mark, who hails from Otukpo, was a key figure. Born in April 1948, David Mark was a retired Nigerian Army brigadier general when he stood for election to the Nigerian Senate in 1999. He would later spend 20 years in the senate during which he was senate president for two consecutive terms – 2007-2011 and 2011-2015. Hence, he was the third in the hierarchy of power in Nigeria during the

Yar'Adua/Goodluck years and was reputed to have diligently served Nigeria and his constituency of Benue South Senatorial District. Therefore, as a representative of a people far too neglected and being privileged to be the number 3 man in the country, it was not too difficult for Senator David Mark to convince Mr. President and his Federal Executive Council to site one of the specialized universities under consideration at the time in Otukpo and; being the haven of many frontline professors of medicine, like Ujah, Idoko among others, and coupled with the fact that Benue itself had been the epicenter of many communicable diseases, the University of Health Sciences would be apt. Before then, and flowing from the same reasons above and more, the Goodluck Jonathan administration had first approved the siting of a Federal Teaching Hospital in Otukpo.

Therefore, FUHSO's principal founding father can unequivocally be said to be Nigeria's statesman and consummate politician of Idoma extraction, Senator David Mark. But if Mark laid the foundation for FUHSO, the struggle at ensuring that his efforts never remained a mere fruitless announcement, especially after the change of government in 2015, was a full blown war that required not the gun that Mark had been accustomed as a retired general but diplomatic and intellectual tactics.

Retired General Muhammadu Buhari, who together with other political figures and power blocks across the country had formed the All Progressives Congress, APC, in 2014, in readiness for a major show down with the then ruling People's Democratic Party, PDP, in the 2015 general elections, had won the presidential election and was sworn in on May 29th, 2015 as the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. Buhari, among his first actions as president, froze several government accounts, cancelled some projects of the past administration and put some on hold on the guise of sanitizing the system. Therefore, the newly established FUHSO fell victim of the Buhari sledge hammer. Consequently, the once happy and elated Idoma people relapsed into hopelessness and sadness – but the intellectual club of the people, who felt challenged at losing a monumental take home in their own realm, took up the gauntlet to 'battle' with the Buhari Government.

And to start with, the club of the intellectuals is the gathering of organized men and women who goes to 'battle' ready and prepared with a leader to chart the course. Hence, although they have many intellectual giants, only a few needed to enlist for this particular 'battle.' Therefore, a team of 7-man negotiators and intellectual lobbyists was formed under the leadership of Professor Ochapa Chico Onazi. An erudite Professor of Agricultural Extension and the first vice chancellor produced by the Idoma nation, Professor Onazi was born in 1936 in Igumale, Ado Local Government Area of Benue State. He obtained a BSc in Zoology from the University College, London in 1964 and worked in the Ministry of Agriculture of Northern Nigeria in Samaru-Zaria and the Institute of Agricultural Research at Ahmadu

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ICT Center with Staff & Students' Canteen, GRA Campus

Bello University, ABU. Completing his Ph.D. in 1973, he was promoted to Senior Extension Specialist cum Senior Lecturer at ABU. In 1981, he became a Professor of Agricultural Extension and Education and in 1984, was appointed Provost and Head of University of Jos, Makurdi Campus. In 1985, Professor O.C Onazi was appointed Vice Chancellor of the University of Jos.

Also on the list of the 7-man team was Professor John Alechenu Idoko, a former Director General of the National Agency for the Control of Aids, NACA, whose dedicated and brilliant forays at the agency saw to the decimation of the dreaded HIV/AIDS pandemic in Nigeria. Professor Idoko trained in internal medicine, infectious diseases and immunology of infections and has been an HIV physician since 1995. He worked as Senior Lecturer and Professor of Medicine at the University of Jos Teaching Hospital. He is also an adjunct professor of medicine at the department of global health, Northwestern University, Chicago USA. Third on the list of course, was Professor Innocent A.O Ujah, mni, a professor of gynecology and obstetrics who had worked extensively in and out of the university system as Senior Lecturer and Consultant at the University of Jos College of Medicine and Teaching Hospital; consultant to international agencies like UNICEF and a one-time Director General of the Nigerian Institute of Medical



Students' Library at Otada Campus

Research, NIMR who was later chosen, for his solid and intimidating credentials, to pioneer the FUHSO as Vice Chancellor. Others were Professor Ediga Agbo; Professor Godwin Owoicho Akpa, a professor of education at the University of Jos who later became the Director of Academic Planning and Control at the FUHSO; Professor Francis Ubah and; Dr. Emmanuel Odu, a medical and public health expert with over 30 years post qualification cognate experience spanning clinical medical practice, public health and project/health management, who later became the institution's Director of Global Health. Hence, together, this group of 7 can be referred to as co-founding fathers of the Federal University of Health Sciences, Otukpo, FUHSO.

Thus, upon its restoration in 2019, its pioneering principal officers, including the vice chancellor, registrar, bursar and librarian were appointed in 2020 and the journey began in earnest. The duty therefore rests with the management under the leadership of Professor Uja, mni, whose responsibility as pioneering vice chancellor goes beyond just being a VC but as a founding father and an Idoma leader, a strong academic and administrator who must deploy every talent and experience at his disposal at ensuring that a solid and resilient foundation is laid for the FUHSO with a view to earning its place among the best and leading medical institutions, not just in Nigeria, but in Africa and the globe.



Physics Department Under Construction at the Permanent Site



Side View of the Administrative Building Nearing Completion at the Permanent Site

PROFILE



The Stadium size Massive College of Medicine under Construction at the Permanent Site



203 Rooms Students' Hostel Under Construction at the Permanent Site



Water Treatment System at the Judith Ogwa Obla Memorial Kidney Centre, FUHSTHO



The 65 KVA Generator at the Judith Ogwa Obla Memorial Kidney Centre



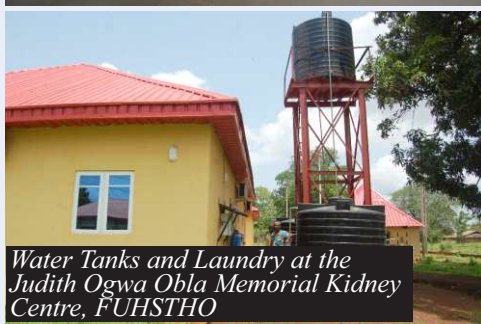
Some of the Official Vehicles of FUHSO



Dialysis Room with Equipment at the Judith Ogwa Obla Memorial Kidney Centre, FUHSTHO



Multi-User Central Teaching and Research Laboratory under Construction at the FUHSTHO



Water Tanks and Laundry at the Judith Ogwa Obla Memorial Kidney Centre, FUHSTHO



Mobile Seats for Disabled Patients at the Memorial Kidney Centre, FUHSTHO



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Block of Laboratories at the Otada Campus



Front View of Administrative Building at the Otada Campus



Academic Building, Otada Campus



Inside Biology/Microbiology Laboratory with Human Skeleton at the Otada Campus



Magnetic stirrer (for sample homogeneity)



Electrical Centrifuge (for segmentation)



Oven (for drying)

PROFESSOR INNOCENT ACHANYA OTOBO UJAH, mni, OON: **THE INTIMIDATING PROFILE OF AN UNSTOPPABLE GENIUS & VICE CHANCELLOR**

By: Henry Adesola, Charles Darlington,
Ibrahim Malik and Clara Obi

On Monday, 22nd May, 2024 at about 4:00pm, after an almost two hours of breathtaking and exhaustive interview at his office at the Otada Campus of the Federal University of Health Sciences, Otukpo, FUHSO, the Vice Chancellor, Professor Innocent Ujah, mni, OON, asked if he needed to furnish us with his profile pursuant to this historic special edition of our magazine. But I wondered what more could be left in the profile after a thorough, painstaking and chronological dissection of his person from birth to his present position in the course of the interview. More so, after more than four decades of extensively crisscrossing the nation's educational and medical/ health system's landscape leaving uncommon landmarks in his sails, his profile from childhood through early education to becoming a professor of medicine at the University of Jos; his forays in NIMR and NMA as well as his unstoppable strides as the VC of FUHSO are all well documented on the internet. However, out of courtesy, I told the VC it was cool to send the profile. Two days later, I received in my email box, a 48-page document that got me completely off guard. The sheer intimidation posed by the voluminous resume, with each page laced with facts and figures of his stage-by-stage journey through professional, administrative and academic career; got me quivering at the thought of navigating through it to deliver a concise profile in a volume of this size. What was eventually done was an abridgement and summary of the lengthy document without losing vital points in the impressive life journey of an African academic, medical expert, unionist and an administrative genius per excellence

In the remote Idoma village of Aidogodo-Okpoga, in the present day Okpokwu Local Government Area of Benue State, a child of great promise was born on the 6th of November, 1954. For those who are familiar with the traditional African setting of that era, it is a well-known fact that giving birth to a new born baby was a great delight but a greater dimension of joy it was when the newborn was a baby boy. The quest for male child among Africans of earlier times, and perhaps still subsisting in some cultures till date, is so crucial that men married multiple wives; divorced



or remarried or became violent towards their wives for failing to bear male children. The joy in the home of Pa. Ujah, a core African traditionalist and polygamist who begat 28 children – children being status symbol of the pristine African societies – can therefore be imagined following the birth of his son, Innocent Achanya Ootobo Ujah.

In 1960, the young Innocent Ujah started his education, an industry he was going to remain riveted for the rest of his life, but at its topmost echelon. There at Aidogodo, his father who, though had little or no formal education at all, but knew the value of western learning for the shaping and reshaping of the future of Idoma land and wished for his son to be in the picture of that narrative, got a placement for his little Innocent Ujah at Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School. Three years afterwards, Innocent Ujah's uncle demanded that the little boy be relocated to Otukpo which, being the clan's main city portended greater educational standards where he, Innocent, could hone his intellectual talents. Little Ujah fell in love with Otukpo; its modernity, metropolitan cultures, the smart kids, beautiful sceneries and of course, the higher standard of schools so much so that when at a time, information got to his father that he was being maltreated in the city and Pa. Ujah came to town (Otukpo) to find out from Achanya if what he heard was true, Innocent Ujah's response was that he was doing pretty good in the city and not suffering as reported.

In the next seven years that followed, Innocent Ujah completed his primary and secondary schools at St. Mary's Primary School and the Government Secondary School, Katsina-Ala respectively. He left for Government College, Keffi for his Higher School Certificate (HSC) from 1972-1973. Events moved very fast and in October 1973, one month to his marking of 19 years of age, the great future that lies ahead of him began to unfold with his admission into the Ahmadu Bello University to study Medicine and Surgery. From completing his MBBS degree in 1978; serving the country as a youth corps member and; returning to ABU for his residency, he never rested on his academic oars before being appointed a professor of obstetrics and gynaecology at the University of Jos in 2001. Thus, Professor Ujah has got the following qualifications; (MBBS(ABU), 1978), Fellow of the National Postgraduate Medical College of Nigeria in Obstetrics and Gynaecology (FMCOG, 1988), Postgraduate Diploma in Health Services Management (1992), Honorary fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine, England (1992), Diploma in International Maternal Health Care (1993), Specialist in Gynecological Endocrinology and Infertility (1987), member, National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, NIPSS (mni, 1995), Honorary fellow of the International College of Surgeons (FICS 1996), Fellow of Nigerian Medical Association (FNMA, 2016) and, Fellow of Nigerian Academy of Medicine (FNAMed, 2019).

Further to these qualifications, Professor Innocent Ujah, a proud recipient of the national honour of the Order Of the Niger (OON); member of the National Institute (mni), following his acquisition of the prestigious high-level Senior Executive Course in policy formulation and strategy at the National Institute for policy and strategic studies (NIPSS), Kuru-Jos, has got enormous other academic, administrative,

research, teaching, consulting and various other working experiences which include the following:

- . Expert and proven progressive over 31 years experience in National Maternal Health policy development in Nigeria Including national integrated planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation activities in 36 states of the Federation and FCT. Contributed to the institution of Safe motherhood activities in Nigeria commencing 1990. Chairman, Safe motherhood Committee in Nigeria, member, Society of Gynaecology and Obstetrics of Nigeria (SOGON) and has participated actively in the development, policy formulation, field-testing of certification criteria and implementation of Women and Children friendly health services.

- . Has participated in the administration of the affairs of professional Associations including 32 consecutive years of membership of the National Executive Council (NEC) of Nigerian Medical Association (NMA), part of which was served as 2nd and 1st National VicePresident of the Association at different times. Has served on the Council of the Society of Gynaecology and Obstetrics of Nigeria (SOGON) consecutively for 21 years and part of which included serving in the capacity of Assistant Secretary-General of the Society and later served as the Secretary-General of the Society of Gynaecology & Obstetrics of Nigeria (SOGON) from 2005 to 2011.

- . Good technical ability to conduct national Safe motherhood and HIV/AIDS needs assessments, national and sub-national surveys with proven skills in research methodology.

- . Proven experience in high-level advocacy and social mobilization for National Government commitment to health, particularly, in safe motherhood through supporting legislation for improvement of maternal and neonatal health in Nigeria towards achieving health-related MDGs.

- . Good grasp and clear understanding of UNICEF corporate mandates in the institution and implementation of national interventions for the reduction of maternal morbidity and mortality through Country Programmes of Co-operation (CPC).

- . Expert understanding and proven experience in maternal health programming using the life cycle approach. Ability to support, contribute and participate in strengthening national and sub-national health systems for the improvement of maternal, neonatal and child health through capacity building of postgraduate medical personnel, paramedical personnel including midwives, community health workers and family planners.

- . Has over 25 years of experience in developing Situation Analysis reports at national and sub-national on the state of women and children's health. Extensive multi-sectoral collaboration with governments, universities, UN agencies and NGOs on the use of situation analysis reports for the improvement of maternal, neonatal and children health programming. Contribution to the development and setting up of quality assurance standards through the use of quality

assurance tools including Client Oriented Provider Efficient Services (COPE tool), Certification Criteria for Women and Children Friendly Health Services with 10 years active implementation and evaluation.

- . UNICEF Project Officer Health, Enugu Zonal Office (July 2002 – July 2003). Implementation of Maternal and Child health programmes with Safe motherhood as priority in 10 states of 32 million people. Fully engaged in inter-sectoral collaboration for the implementation of safe motherhood activities. Proven experience in the use of social mobilization strategies as cross cutting tool for the improvement of community-based maternal health activities including key Safe motherhood household practices.

- . Member of the Zonal HIVAIDS committee for advocacy and mobilization of government and stakeholders for the prevention of Mother to Child Transmission of HIVAIDS. Member of the Zonal Technical Committee on VCT. Broad and proven experience in the main strategies of HIVAIDS programming.

- . Successful implementation of the Roll Back Malaria programme in the UNICEF Zonal Office. Improved social marketing strategies for community acceptability of Insecticide treated Nets (ITNs) as part of malaria control programme and;

- . Good and proven negotiating skills in government partnerships, ability to work harmoniously in international environment and settings

Professor Innocent Ujah is a renowned consultant in the field of gynaecology and obstetrics to many local and especially international organizations, which include the following: appointed Consultant to DFID/PATHS, (UK), in the survey of Emergency Obstetric Care (EOC) in Benue State, Nigeria, which report and dissemination presentations were rated very highly by PATHS and Partners; Assistant Project Officer (Health), UNICEF Zonal Office at Enugu and National Office, Abuja (July 2002-December 2004); Consultant to NACA on the review of anti-retroviral therapy in the North central states In 2005; Consultant to SNR/USAID on the needs assessment of national response to HIV/AIDS in Benue and Kaduna States in 2005; Consultant on EOC Training for Doctors to Adamawa state World Bank Assisted HSDP II Project in 2005, 2006 and 2007; Consultant to Society for Family Health (SFH) on Situation Analysis on Post-partum Haemorrhage and Misoprostol, IUCD /Implants in Nigeria, April-May 2008 and; Consultant to HERFON on Evaluating free maternal mortality in six African Countries (July 2008).

Others include: International Consultant to Population Services International (PSI) on the Development of National Guidelines on Termination of Pregnancy for Legal Indications (April 2017 to April 2018); Consultant to Population Services International (PSI) on Harm Reduction against Unwanted Pregnancy in Nigeria (June 2018-to–2020); Consultant to Population Services International, Nigeria (PSIN) on Harm Reduction Counselling Master Trainers (Feb

2023 to September 2023) and; Consultant to Population Services International (PSI) on Menstrual Hygiene and Health (MHH) (September 2023 to date). Professor Ujah worked also at various times as: National Coordinator, Gates/FIGO MNH project in Nigeria for strengthening Institutional Capacity for the Society of Gynaecology and Obstetrics of Nigeria (SOGON); appointed Co-Chair of the Treatment Research Group (TRG) on Ebola Virus Disease and other infectious diseases in 2014 by the Minister of Health; appointed member of the Ministerial Lassa Fever Control Committee in February 2016; member, Presidential Project Implementation Committee (PIC) on the establishment of University Teaching Hospital Otukpo and; member, Regional Working Group on Best Practices of West African Health Organization (WAHO)

Professor Ujah, mni, was Chairman, UNICEF Zone D Committee on women and children Friendly Health Services (WCFHS) since 1998 and was Dean, Faculty of Medical Sciences, University of Jos, Jos Plateau State (from 2006-2008) where he successfully established the Department of Medical Laboratory Science (Undergraduate programme) and the Master in Public Health (MPH) (Graduate) programme. He also garnered tremendous wealth of administrative and professional knowledge and experience as Head of Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, University of Jos (1994-2000); Chairman, Medical Advisory Committee (MAC), Jos University Teaching Hospital (JUTH), Jos (1996-1999); member, Governing Council, University of Jos. (1997-1999); Director General, Nigerian Institute of Medical Research (NIMR), Yaba-Lagos (2010-2016) and; President, Nigerian Medical Association (2020-2022).

Restless and insatiable, Professor Ujah has got several other laurels and professional fellowships, some of which include: Foundation Fellow of Nigerian Academy of Medicine (FNAMed) (2019); Honorary Fellow of International College of Surgeons, FICS (Chicago) (1996); Diploma in International Maternal Health care, University of Uppsala, (Dip. IMHC Uppsala, Sweden), (1993); Postgraduate Diploma in Health Services Management, PGDM (UNIJOS) (1992); Honorary Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine, FRS Med (UK) (1992); Fellow of the Medical College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, National Postgraduate Medical of Nigeria, FMCOG (1988); Cert. Gynaecology Endocrinology and infertility (UK) (1987) and; Cert. Reproductive Endocrinology (UK) (1986). Others are: sub-specialization in maternal and reproductive health and, reproductive endocrinology and endocrine infertility.

In addition to his litany of administrative experiences and expertise, Professor Innocent Achanya Otobo Ujah, mni, OON, also navigated the following paths: Member, Governing Board of University of Benin Teaching Hospital, Benin City (March 2018-Date); Member, Governing Board of Nigerian Institute of Medical Research, Yaba-Lagos (2010-July 2016); Chairman, Board of Trustees of the NIMR Pension Fund at the Nigerian Institute of Medical Research (2010-2015); Vice-Chairman, Medical and Dental Council OF Nigeria (MDCN) (2014-2015); Member, TETFUND Research Fund Screening and monitoring Sub-Committee for Science & Technology (June 2010-2016); Member, Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria (MDCN) (July 2009-2011) and; Chairman, Medical Education Committee,

Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria (MDCN) (July 2009-2011).

Others are: Member, Appointment, Promotion & Disciplinary Committee (APDC), Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria (MDCN) (July 2009-2011); Member, Board of Management of Jos University Teaching Hospital (JUTH), Jos (Dec. 2006-Nov.2007); Member, Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria (MDCN), Regulatory body of medical standards & practice in Nigeria (Jan.2004-Nov.2007); Member, Implementation Committee on the establishment of College of Health Sciences in Benue state University (BSU), Makurdi (2001-2007); Member, Board of National Orthopedic Hospital, Kano (2001-2004); Member, Steering Committee for the Establishment of Faculty of Medicine, Benue State University (BSU), Makurdi, Nigeria (Oct.1999-2001); Member, Administrative Tenders Committee, University of Jos, (April 1997-Dec.15,1999); Member, Finance and General Purposes Committee (F & GPC), University of Jos, Jos (April 1997-Dec.15,1999); Chairman, Medical Advisory Committee, Jos University Teaching Hospital, Jos, Nigeria (1996-1999); Member, Governing Council of the University of Jos, Nigeria (April 1997-Dec.15, 1999); Senate Representative on Tender's Committee, University of Jos (1996-1997); Director, Board of Okpoga Microfinance Bank, Okpoga, Benue State (1996-Date); Member, Board of Management, National Institute of Ophthalmology (National Eye Centre), Kaduna (1991-1994) and; Member, Independent Judging Panel (IJP) of National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA) (2023).

A well rounded academic, a seasoned administrator, teacher, researcher and a medical professional of global worth, Professor Ujah has attended or participated in over a hundred local and international conferences, workshops and seminars; written or contributed to over one hundred publications, theses, papers and several books or book chapters. He has done extensive collaborative research with national and international research institutions; his experience in research proposal writing and sponsorship makes him one of the leading researchers in the field of gynaecology and related medicine. Professor Ujah has delivered numerous lectures nationally and internationally and presented over a hundred abstracts at conferences and seminars. Professor Innocent Ujah is a recipient of several local and international awards. He is an active member and leader of the Nigerian Medical Association where he was at various times, Chairman of the Plateau State Chapter, second and later first vice president and eventually national president of the NMA between 2020 and 2022. He is a life member of the National Association of Resident Doctors (NARD) and a recipient of the National Productivity Order of Merit (NPOM) Award, among others.

It is this vast experience, expertise and networks that Professor I.A.O Ujah, mni, OON, NPOM, brought to the services of the Federal University of Health Sciences, Otukpo when he was appointed the pioneer Vice Chancellor in May 2020. The Federal Government could not have made a better choice because aside being an international medical expert, leader and a professor of rare pedigree, Professor Ujah is a big stakeholder in the FUHSO project, being one of its founding

fathers, a committed Idoma man and leader and one who is extremely passionate about medicine, teaching, research and consultancy. Upon assumption of duty as the pioneer Vice Chancellor therefore, he left no one in doubt that he came prepared and that he is unstoppable. Starting a University is a demanding task, but commencing a university of medicine or medical/health sciences is a quite tougher adventure – requiring enormous resources of human, material, space and of course, funding and more funding. These reasons account for why conventional universities exist for decades without being able to start a college of medicine. The commitment of the Federal Government of Nigeria to embark on specialized universities of medical sciences at a time resources were dwindling was therefore an audacious move which required very tough and determined administrators to build the canvas needed for such institutions to thrive.

Usually, universities or institutions upon establishment commence activities from a temporary site. Therefore, FUHSO took off at a temporary site located in Otada, Otukpo, Benue State in 2020. The site was supposedly a Youth Centre which had become abandoned. Significant shaping, reshaping, modification and face-lifting were carried out to suit the need of the young institution. Today, within that cluster of space lies the institution's administrative building; laboratories, including: chemistry, physics, biology/microbiology and anatomy laboratories; community medicine, lecture rooms, ICT Centre and students' hostels. However, anyone who visits the temporary site at Otada will appreciate the fact that such a space is extremely inadequate for the institution. If a casual observer realizes this, then Professor Ujah knew far better. The VC knew the challenges of the constraints of space for the expression of the institution's purposes and aspirations and unknowing to many around him, he had his nose and eyes around for the slightest opportunity to expand the university's reach in terms of space. Therefore, one of the greatest legacies of the Professor Ujah's vice chancellorship was the acquisition (purchase) of a large and well-built hotel, the Double K, said to belong to the music legend, Bongos Ikwue (another huge contribution of the Bongos' music cum entrepreneurial adventure to FUHSO, Otukpo, Nigeria, Africa and the world), in the GRA area of the town and turning it into an additional temporary campus of the FUHSO, called the GRA Campus. Also remodeled, the GRA Campus today houses the institution's Faculty of Science and several institutes, including the Institute of Global Health and Health Security; the Institute of Infectious Diseases; offices for academic and non-academic officers and staffs as well as an ICT Centre.

Vast, experienced, savvy, innovative and purposeful, Professor Ujah has got quest for more for the FUHSO. If he had the means, he would wish the institution was launched on its permanent site at once with all the physical infrastructure and environment needed for a solid academic and research work – but wishes were never horses. As far back as 2015 when the university was first established, the founding fathers with the host communities had acquired a massive 600 hectares of land for the institution's permanent site, which is intended to accommodate both the university and the teaching hospital. On his resumption of duties as VC, Professor Ujah's mind cast a burning passion on the permanent site. Again, one of the

reasons the history of the university and that of present and future generations of Idoma and Africans alike will forever be kind to this rare gem, Professor Ujah, was the courage and foresight that propelled such an early work at the permanent site.

In the first place, very many well-known universities and other institutions today spent decades in their permanent sites, some even forgetting the need for the permanent sites until after a very long period of time when the temporary sites were becoming an embarrassment or grossly inadequate to contain growth and development. Secondly, given the gale of insecurity in the country today, it requires extra courage to visit the FUHSO permanent site let alone working on it. When we visited the site on Tuesday 23rd May, 2024, the officer assigned to lead our team had to invite a few other people who were conversant with the terrain and we were armed with mild weapons like cutlasses and we ensured the day had well broken before we commenced our trip. It was that serious!

Hence, given these circumstances, side by side with the economic challenges in the polity, the last thing any administrator should think about was commencing such a huge project. But Professor Ujah is unstoppable. Soon after taking off, the VC awarded a contract to dig a ditch round the perimeters of the permanent site. This he said was to prevent any encroachment on the land. Two years after, the VC commenced major construction works on the site. The structures are world class, massive and incredible. The size of the College of Medicine, which is up to 60 per cent complete, for instance, is worth the size of a standard football pitch or a complete stadium. Other ongoing structures include the university's administrative building; Faculty of Science's twin Departments of Physics and Microbiology; students' hostels; principal officers' quarters, including the VC's lodge; gate house and; perimeter fencing.

As these are going on, a restless Professor Ujah turned his attention to another crucial area in the life of the Institution. For a nascent institution with obvious limitations in terms of space, infrastructure and funding, one would expect the institution to start and limit itself to less demanding academic programs like the basic sciences until such a time when conditions are rife for the core courses like medicine, pharmacy and the likes. But Professor Ujah, mni, OON, the VC, sees no reason to be stopped. To him, if it is a University of Health Sciences, then a University of Health Sciences it must be; it would be an embarrassment to his long list of academic, professional and administrative laurels to tell intending qualified applicants that the major courses for which the institution is called a university of health sciences are not on offer. Therefore, willy-nilly, the FUHSO's College of Medicine must start.

But then, a major requirement to train medical doctors was a teaching hospital, which the institution, though has in papers with the earlier approval of a Teaching Hospital in Otukpo, but not in reality. Determined, Professor Ujah in company of his management team, paid a courtesy visit to the State Governor to demand for the release of a State General Hospital in Otukpo, built in the early 20th century, perhaps in the 40s.

After the meeting, the Governor graciously handed over the facility completely and forever to FUHSO. It was an elated team under the leadership of Professor Ujah that returned to Otukpo, glad to finally commence the training of medical doctors. Today, the first set of the institution's students in medicine and surgery are in their third year and will in less than one year, commence their clinicals. But that was not the whole story about Professor Ujah's new found teaching hospital. As an old facility with little or no government attention for decades, the facility needed to be upgraded to meet the requirements of its new purposes. FUHSO has therefore promptly taken over the facility and it is being gradually transformed for use by the medical students who will soon qualify for clinicals following accreditation by the Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria, MDCN. Among the facilities being provided is the Multi-User Central Teaching and Research Laboratory under construction at the teaching hospital.

Yet, that is not the whole story about Professor Ujah's Teaching Hospital (the former State General Hospital, Otukpo). Earlier on March 21, 2022, a prominent son of Idoma land and a Senior Advocate of Nigeria, Chief Godwin Odumu Obla, SAN had lost his beautiful wife, Judith Ogwa Obla, to the cold hands of death after a prolonged battle with complications arising from diabetes which led to kidney failure, in faraway United States of America. Professor Ujah, in his capacity as FUHSO's VC therefore decided to pay a condolence visit to the bereaved Obla family. Consequently, Chief Godwin Obla, SAN, pledged to donate a fully built, equipped and staffed Kidney Centre in loving memory of his dear wife to the FUHSO Teaching Hospital. The multi-million-naira edifice which was commissioned in May 2023, is designed for not just the provision of purely dialysis services but a centre for training, services and research.

The Judith Ogwa Obla Memorial Kidney Centre has six units of brand-new dialysis machines with manufacturer's warranty; two beds in the Intensive Care Unit; a Renal Laboratory; laundry; two dialysis wards with cable TV; a conference room equipped with cable TV with provisions for online trainings; a water treatment plant and a 1,000 liter underground water storage reservoir; nurses' room; inverter (for constant power supply); automatic oxygen regulator; solar power with CCTV Cameras and; a 65 KVA Generator. Reputed as the first of its kind in north central Nigeria, the donation came with a Forty (40) Million Naira Endowment Prize by the Godwin Obla Foundation which is split into Judith Ogwa Obla endowment of N10m for the best graduating student in Nephrology; Joseph Elagbaje Obla Snr endowment of N10m, for best graduating student in Internal Medicine; Godwin Odumu Obla, SAN endowment of N10m, for best graduating student in Urology and; Dr. Idoko Edwin One, Osonyetta K'Idoma and Odejo Owukpa endowment of N10m for the best overall graduating student.

For his numerous achievements, other Vice Chancellors and management teams of similar universities of health/medical sciences in Nigeria have visited the FUHSO to understudy the magic wands of Professor Ujah and why despite all odds, he seems unstoppable!

“FUHSO HAS STARTED ON A SOUND FOOTING AS A RESEARCH ORIENTED UNIVERSITY”

-PROFESSOR INNOCENT UJAH, mni, OON, VICE CHANCELLOR

Who Is Professor Innocent Ujah?

My name is Professor Innocent Achanya Otobo Ujah, mni, OON and; 'mni' is synonymous with my name. As a matter of fact, if you mention my name without attaching the 'mni', I will say it's not my name (laughs). And that shows how much I value the membership of the National Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS). I am from Aidogodo-Okpoga in Benue State. I'm the second of the then 28 children of my father who was both polygamous and a traditionalist. I grew up in the village, Aidogodo, up to about 8 years of my life and I went to Primary School, as infant (*"infante"* as it was then called) at St. Theresa's Catholic Primary School which was changed in 1963 to Our Ladies of Lourdes' Primary School. I Stayed there for up to Standard 3. Then in February 1964, my uncle, Mr. Otobo Abba of blessed memory asked me to come to Otukpo to continue with my studies. So I came to Otukpo in 1964 and continued my studies in Class 5 series at St. Mary's in Otukpo here and finished in 1966 at class 7. After that I got admission into Provincial Secondary School, Katsina-Ala, which was later changed to Government Secondary School, Katsina-Ala, through interview, at that time you don't need to know anybody. So I Started Form One in 1967 in Katsina-Ala. Kastina-Ala Government Secondary School has produced a lot of great people – like T.Y Danjuma, General Jega, Victor Malu and a lot of other big men in Nigeria. So I'm proud to say that I went to a school that has produced among the who's who in Nigeria. From there, after completing my secondary school, I went to Government College, Keffi between 1971 to June, 1972. We were the first and only set in Nigeria that spent one-and-a-half years in HSC (Higher School Certificate) - the most difficult period of my training So I was admitted to study medicine in ABU and after 5 years of rigorous work, I graduated as a Doctor in 1978, specifically, 16th of June, 1978. I then proceeded for my NYSC (National Youth Service Corps) in Ila-Orangun. Ila-Orangun today is in Osun state. After that I moved again to ABU to start my residency training very quickly and it was progressing well. I actually had a scholarship in Benue State under Aper Aku but that scholarship had to stay because I needed to get to a certain level in my residency training before using it. And when I went; I went in 1985. So I got there and; I actually went there for research on an area that was very dear to me. The consultant, Professor Christopher Balogun Leech, who was both a Sierra Leonean and a Briton, was very good to me. He was a very nice man. He thought me obstetrics and gynecology. He also got me a waiver of payment for my research study in polycystic covey syndrome and infertility. And the Laboratory was in Lynn Garden City. That research study brought me out to the open. I designed a dosage called neuro-foliotrophine, it's metrodine – that is the trade name. it's an NFT that will stimulate egg production in infertility and the study came out very well. It was on BBC and



all that. Six months after I came back, I joined the University of Jos as a Lecturer I and Consultant in the Teaching Hospital. I rose through the ranks and became a professor in 2001 – about 23 years ago. In between, I had so many things: I became the Head of Department, I became Chairman MAC (Medical Advisory Committee) in the Teaching Hospital and moved on and on. At one point I was working with International Organizations like UNICEF, UNFPA. We were the first group of workers that occupied the United Nations' office in 2003-2004 – UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO and the rest. After that I returned to the University of Jos and in 2006, I was elected Dean of Faculty of Medical Sciences and I was in that capacity till 2008. And then in 2010, I applied for and was appointed by Mr. President, Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, as the Director General of the Nigerian Institute of Medical Research, NIMR. And I would say I was the first northerner to be the D.G of NIMR. It was not a political appointment, we did interview. Initially, we were about 18 that applied but shortlisted to six and out of the six, I took first. So I was there and I'm happy that I

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made some remarkable impacts in that place, because as I was told, at a time little was known of NIMR. I established partnership and collaboration, I built a cancer research center, I started building an e-library which went up to about 70--80 per cent before we were disengaged in 2016. I went back and continued to do my job. I was totally committed in doing so; doing the best I can and then the issue of this university came up. In fact, before now, there was supposed to be a Federal Teaching Hospital which the Federal Executive Council had approved for Otukpo and I was a member of the Presidential Implementation Committee which was chaired by Professor Eugene Okpere. While we were doing that, on the 20th of May, 2015, the Federal University of Health Sciences, Otukpo was established. Unfortunately, it was short-lived when there was change of government, but restored in 2019 through our advocacy, lobbying and negotiation. So in a way, God has been very kind to me because many things have happened in my life that I remain very grateful to Him. Like I said, in 1983 I was a senior registrar when I got married to my wife, who incidentally, the father was my teacher in 1965 in Saint Mary's. He later became a nurse, but he was my teacher. So when it was time that we wanted her hand in marriage, the father had no hesitation because he knew me very well. Then in school, he (the father-in-law) always wanted me to be close to him because they felt I was brilliant and then, fortunately, I married one of the daughters. And there has not been any regrets since then. This is the short story of my life.

Challenges of the Nigerian Health System:

On the issue of the challenges of the health system in Nigeria, I think the basic problem is that we do not know what health is. We don't value health; you cannot invest in what you don't value. It would be difficult. Many of us view health as just any other sector, which is not. You talked about health and food, and you are right, but many people in government do not

appreciate what health is. They only know of health when they are sick, and it would be too late. But preventive medicine is number one. So we do not value health. They think health is about politics, no! Health is completely different; you can't do that. The reason I'm here is probably because of my education. So if we do not value health, we cannot be talking of development and real human capital. And we must appreciate that health is highly capital intensive. We must therefore plan. And it is quite unfortunate, other countries of the world that have developed, it is because they value health and that is why they have the national health insurance. Britain has what they called health service insurance. We started ours around 2005 under President Obasanjo, it should have started in the 60s. the NMA put its position paper for health insurance in the 60s. up till today we have not made any headway because politics comes into it and that is the problem we are facing. Nigeria is so large, apart from people, we have a very large land mass. We said we are about; we don't even know our population. (cut in: "estimated to be 200 million") – we are working on estimates. We cannot develop by working on estimates, because we don't know who we are, how many we are and who you don't know you cannot plan for. And we need to plan for our health like every other thing. We need to plan but unfortunately we cannot because politics comes into census. That is why we can never know the true numbers of Nigerians. And when we talk about the number of Nigerians, we must disaggregate them: how many are under 5, because their requirements are different; the adolescents, under 20; the young adults; the elderly. So you see, we cannot disaggregate these because we are muffled with politics of ethno religious sentiments and what have you. So we are not ready. That is the truth. I think the only time we seemed to have some semblance of good plans was during the time of Professor Olikoye Ransome Kuti as the Health Minister when our immunization coverage was about 80 -90 per cent. There are ways to assess the quality of health in any nation: immunization

coverage of children under 5, the next is under 5 deaths and then the maternal mortality, these are the indicators of the level of development of health. Anywhere you find that there is high rate of maternal mortality, the place is poor and underdeveloped. Look at, in our country today, if you get to a place like Oyo State in the southwest, because literacy is important, that is education, as number one; economic empowerment, number two. In fact, the first one is literacy. If you compare the number of deaths at pregnancy and childbirth with those in the north, even north central, like Benue; then you go to places like Kano, Maiduguri, the maternal mortality is very high and that is a sign of underdevelopment. We are talking of maternal mortality of between 654 to 100 thousand deliveries. In Sweden, it is 4 per 100 thousand deliveries, America is about 11, U.K is between 6 and 9. But if you come to Africa, it's a disgraceful scene. I do not want to go into more serious details other than the fact that we do not value health. There is what is called poverty and there are dimensions of poverty. There is what we call poverty of knowledge. Many of our people are literates but they are poor in their health thinking behavior: our environment is dirty and so many things. I give you



five years, if we continue like this, the number of mal-nutrition will increase because many people cannot afford food and drugs due to insecurity and inflation. The drugs we used to buy for like N3,000 is now about N15,000. Who is in the village that can afford to buy drugs of N15,000? Is that not condemnation to death? So we have so many problems. But the problem is that we think we can solve all the problems at the same time – but no! We take one, and then take two and solve. Then the next person that comes will take the next one. For instance, if you take health and education and solve the problems, the rest can follow. Next you go to agriculture. In fact, they can go simultaneously: education, health and agriculture; it's a tripod, they can go together and others will follow. Because once you have education, you have health, you have food, you will be alive to go through a pathway. Then if another administration comes, he will concentrate on roads and electricity, because you need power if you want to industrialize your own country. But we think that we have to impress the country, so we put everything at once, at the end of the day, the budget is not enough. Of course, we are very extravagant as a nation and we like showmanship, we want to show that we are rich, meanwhile we are poor. (cut in: “we are giants of Africa”) – giant for nothing, we are not anything giant, if we are giant, we should be far ahead of others. Nigeria has very many intelligent people, I mean, if you look at what is happening in the *japa* syndrome, Nigerian doctors are very well trained, and I say it anywhere. You can test it by the number of people that are being recruited from Nigeria. From Europe, America, Southern Arabia and all over. So, it is a manifestation of the training; very rigorous training in medicine here. But in the end, we don't achieve much. If we get one quarter of the facilities they have in Europe and America, we would be flying. But we don't have them. And when we talk, they will say “is it only medicine?” Unfortunately, even in the university, when you go to the senate, they will say “are you the only people?” There are some courses that you don't need to go to school for, you can read in the library and be fine. But medicine? See here, this is a Medical University; we provide accommodation from the beginning to the end. They must be living in accommodation because they must concentrate and read and read and work; come to the library and so on. So when people don't have priorities, that's what you get. So in a way, we have a good system and God is helping us but people don't realize that. I'm happy that TETFund is helping us; were it not for TETFund, we would have been finished. Yes! Because there's no fund anywhere. TETFund is the only organization that is helping us today. And we are happy and grateful that we have somebody that is very experienced; who knows what he wants, that's the Executive Secretary of TETFund, Arc. Sonny Echono. He is a great man.

Tailoring Specialized Universities to Solving Challenges in the Sector:

Well, let me just say that it is by His grace that specialized universities of medicine are being eventually realized. Everywhere in developed countries, you have medical universities. But the first university of health sciences would have been this university because by May 20th, 2015, it was established before it was later suspended. Therefore, the first

medical university in Nigeria is Ondo State University of Medical Sciences, UNIMED. Former Governor Olusegun Mimiko did a great job and we are happy about that. And my friend, Professor Friday Okonofua became the pioneer Vice Chancellor and I'm happy that I'm the pioneer Vice Chancellor of this University. Now, the issue like I said; a university is known for three things: one is teaching, two is research and three is community service. And our University, the Federal University of Health Sciences, Otuipo has started on a very sound footing. Within the first one, two years of our existence, we got a mega grant to do a ground breaking research on Lassa fever. Lassa fever is an acute viral disease and has been killing a large number of people in Nigeria such as Benue, Ondo, Edo and many states in Nigeria. Therefore, we got that grant from TETFund; we made a proposal, it was assessed and then we got that grant. Now, as young as we are, we also got grants from the institutional based research. We have 27 proposals that were approved by TETFund and I'm proud to say that I was one of the principal investigators. Even as a Vice Chancellor, I was conducting research on hypertensive disorders in pregnancy. Because this is a virgin land; Benue South Senatorial District is a virgin land in terms of research; there's no data and what have you. So we have to get data. Even though this is a national university, but we must get data from the host environment. We must characterize diseases in this place and a lot of things have been done. And we are also hoping that; in fact, we have another proposal that we are sending to TETFund for research, because I told them that this thing is not politics. As far as I know, the only thing that makes a university known is research - in ABU, it is research; Ibadan, it's research, it's not politics. So we have started on a very sound footing, we train, build capacity for research; we participate in research, we carry out research and I participate with them. As a Vice Chancellor, I go to the field with them, because that is the one thing that will stand even when I leave this place – research, research and research! And as a gynecologist, we are very interested in issues of maternal health. In fact, we just established the Institute of Maternal and Reproductive Health. We have also established the Institute of Global Health and Health Security; we have Institute of Infectious Diseases. Because we must entrench research, not just research but impactful research; translational research, we must do that. We must get data from Benue South Senatorial District. And in fact, the Lassa fever research is in the six north central states and the FCT. Because we need to get data, we need to study, research and characterize the vector that brings the Lassa fever disease. So we are not resting at all. In fact, in my own life, there's no dull moment. So, we will continue to work and work and work! It is not easy but through TETFund. If it were not for TETFund, it would have been absolutely impossible. When I was in NIMR, I advocated, I lobbied for NIMR to be the hub of grants for research in Nigeria - politics killed it. Meanwhile, the National Institute of Health in the United States, it is billions of dollars they are given every year. I established a relationship with Emory University while I was there at NIMR and now they are doing a lot of research through my collaboration and partnership with Emory University because we have one of our very good friends there, Professor Igbo Oforokun from Delta; he's my very good friend. And we established that relationship. Now a lot of trainings, capacity building and research are going on in NIMR.

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Through that, the National Institute of Health in the U.S is supporting NIMR and the Emory to train people up to Ph.D. levels. But this is not by politics and it is not by wish, it is what you sow that you will reap.

The Future of the Health System in Nigeria:

Very bright! It is bright because, the beauty at the moment as you know, there are about 8 universities of health in Nigeria, they are purely medical, right? We have in each zone, federal government established university of health sciences. The one in Otukpo is the first of the six. We have one in the northeast in Azare, we have one in the northwest in Funtua, we have one in the southwest in Ila-Orangun, we have one in the south-south in Kwale and then you have one in Ebonyi state for the southeast. So these are six specialized medical universities, apart from the private ones like PAMO and the Lagos Medical University and then you have the medical university in Ondo. The federal government has established six and I think they will go further, probably establish another one in Abuja. So we are the best and we are doing our best to remain on top but then there are a lot of challenges. One of the challenges we have is that any students that come here want to read medicine and we are limited. Usually, for colleges of medicine, if you want to start training doctors, you cannot go beyond 50. So when I went to the Medical and Dental Council, MDCN, they gave me our own quota. They said 50, I said it cannot be 50 (laughs). We are not a college; we are a university of medical sciences. So we were able to get 100 to begin with. They are in their third year now. Very soon, the 300 level students will be going to the hospital after accreditation by the MDCN and we are working very hard towards that. So it is not easy, but nothing good comes easy. So we have many challenges, prime among them is also the fund. The fund is not there but for the TETFund that is helping to do the best they can do. We also help with training many medically qualified doctors in the various fields to be able to cope with the demands because capacity is key.

The Infrastructural Vision and Development of FUHSO's Permanent Site:

You will go there. You will have to go there to go and see, because seeing is believing. The reality is that this University is very unique; it is planned. You know, it didn't come by accident. The pioneers; those who did this work, the number one is Senator David Mark. He was the one who ensured that we got the University on the 20th of May, 2015. Even after it was suspended for some period by the administration of President Buhari for reasons best known to him, we went to our trenches to lobby. For instance, what the Niger Delta people in Okerenkoko did about the maritime university's suspension was to go to the creeks and told the Government of Nigeria that if they don't restore that university, they would blow pipes (laughs). And we don't have pipes here (laughs again). Besides,



we can't even do that because we are a peaceful people. We love peace, we don't look for trouble and he knows. So what we did was to start lobbying. And we were led by Professor O.C Onazi, the former Vice Chancellor of the University of Jos between 1985/86 to 1989. So he was our leader. We were 7 that took up the gauntlet after David Mark had cleared the road for us by bringing this University here. Apart from Professor Onazi who was our leader; we also have Professor John Idoko, who was a Director General of NACA (National Agency for the Control of Aids); myself, I was there and I'm still there; Professor Ediga Agbo, who was the Deputy Vice Chancellor (admin), was one of us; Professor Owoicho Akpa, he is a professor of education at the University of Jos, but he was here as a director of academic planning before he left. Then Professor Francis Ubah was with us and; Dr. Emmanuel Odu, who is currently the Senior Special Adviser to the Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare, but he was here as Director of Global Health. You know, we harvest talents here; it is something we conceived, not by accident. So we started hunting for excellence and we got my very good friend from Zaria, Professor Oladapo Shittu, he's the Provost of the College of Medicine and he's been doing an excellent job there. So when we put all this together, like I said, by 2015, the permanent site had been acquired; a 600 hectares of land, which would house a Teaching Hospital and the University. But we had to start from somewhere. So we started from Otada campus. This used to be a Youth Centre, but has been modeled and remodeled to suit our purpose. And we started. You see, experience and observation are very important. When we were at the University of Jos, I found that we were at the temporary site for close to 40 years. And during that period, they were encroaching into the land and they have encroached so much into the land, same with the University of Abuja, they also encroached into their land. So when I came, I said we were not going to waste time. The very year we came here, I got bulldozers and excavators, they started digging the perimeters of the land to secure the place. Otherwise, very soon people will go into town

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and say it's their land but with the excavation that was done, if you enter, we will put sand on you very quickly (laughs). Yes! Because it is very deep. So that nobody will have any illusion to say that *ehh*, it is his land. We did that, and within the first one year; because we came in 2020, then in 2021/2022, we started construction. We started with the Senate Building; the College of Medicine; Faculty of Science; Hostels; Principal Officers' Quarters - they are all ongoing now. Only this year, I started fencing the place and then the gate of the University is being built. When you go there, you will see that all those things are on ground. And we are not joking at all; we are paying serious attention to them. Fortunately, TETFund, through due process is supporting us like they are supporting other universities. Before then, we've got, in 2015, for the Teaching Hospital that was aborted, we've got allocation of N5 billion. So when that didn't work, part of it was used for this place and therefore, we had to move the remaining money to the permanent site. I said we were not going to put any heavy structure in the temporary site, we must go to the permanent site. But something happened. Ordinarily you would expect that we would have constraint of space, but God is wonderful! For some reasons; you know, because discussing with people, you gain a lot. I was discussing sometime with Bongos; BongosIkwue, you must have heard him, if you have not heard his songs, then you've not listened to music. BongosIkwue is a great, great musician. And after a while; in fact, when I came here, he ensured that I stayed in a very posh accommodation in his hotel - Double-K. But we will not see Double-k again because it's gone, we bought it through the help of TETFund. Today, it's our campus which we call the GRA Campus. So, here is Otada Campus and that is GRA Campus. Our offices are there and we are planning to furnish the place for all lecturers, both clinical and non-clinical. We have employed doctors, professors and more. Although we still need more, but we have a good number now because I was thinking far ahead. Then the Teaching Hospital. We used to have the old hospital that was built in the 40s which became a general hospital of the State Government. But I lobbied the government. I went to the Governor with my principal officers and said they should please give us that place. Ordinarily, what State Governments do is that they probably will give you for a period, just like they did to us at the University of Jos, they pushed us away from that place after some time because it was acquired in 1982 or so; no! 1981. By 2010, they pushed us away.



So with the hindsight of that experience, I went to him (the Governor); we discussed and he said, well, they will give us the place and that will be the contribution of the State Government to the University. So, I was very happy. But that was not the end. It's not easy, people were putting stunts everywhere, but I was ahead of them. So, the beauty of it is that; because if you don't have the teaching hospital, you can't train doctors and we must start from somewhere, just like in ABU; we were trained in Tundunwada General Hospital, but it is equipment and human beings that matter, it is not the buildings. So, eventually last year, on the 13th of April, after so many things; first of all, there's no compensation, no any payments, it's given to us free. All we

committed to was that the staff that are qualified would be engaged, otherwise, no any other thing; every other thing was left for us. Therefore, the good news is that we now have a Teaching Hospital with an Acting Chief Medical Director and it's functional and there are a lot of constructions going on there. The reasons we've been able to go this far is because the experiences we've garnered everywhere and over the years we've brought them home to ensure that we have a place which may not be the best at the moment, but as far as I'm concerned, it is working. It is not easy, but we are determined – we have determined staff, the principal officers are determined; they are hard working. I usually don't sleep before 12 midnight every day because I have so much to do. But I'm not saying they should not sleep; I'm used to suffering, so I don't bother when I sleep, but I must do my assignment. Any assigned roles, I must do it. So God is helping us, we must say so, that God is helping us.

What to be Remembered for as Pioneer Vice Chancellor?

Well, being a pioneer is enough to be remembered for. But I'm not just a sitting pioneer. We've gone all round; we are able to harness potentials. This university is a place where you don't need to know anybody to get admission. I can show you the letter of admission in this place, it is there. You don't sell handouts. No sexual harassment; if you do that, you are gone. So, discipline is number one. You don't need to know anybody to get employment; you don't need to pay a kobo to get employment here. If I know that, you are sacked. Anybody who collects anything will be in trouble. I didn't do all that and I say why should anybody? That is not to say that I'm perfect, but these are things that are being put on ground. One of the legacies I will like to be remembered for was the procurement of Double-K, it was simply the best hotel in Otukpo.

We, The Good People of Otukpo Celebrate One of Our Own
An Icon & A Pacesetter,



CHIEF PROFESSOR INNOCENT ACHANYA OTOBO UJAH, mni, OON

Chief Prof I.A.O Ujah mni, OON, NPOM, The Vice Chancellor, Federal University of Health Sciences, Otukpo, FUHSO, has laid a solid foundation as the Pioneer Vice Chancellor of the Institution which will stand the test of time in decades to come. For us Otukpo people we will continue to celebrate him for his lofty Achievements and Uncommon Contributions to the Academic, Health and Socio-economic Advancement of Otukpo Kingdom, Idoma people and Nigeria. I also wish to affirm that this honour is well deserved.

On behalf of all of the Otukpo dynasty of Benue State, I celebrate you.



Chief Dr. John Eimonye, CON,
Traditional Ruler/Custodian, Otukpo Kingdom, Benue State

CONGRATULATIONS

Hearty felicitation to the Vice Chancellor Federal University of Health Sciences Otukpo, Prof. Innocent A. O. Ujah MNI, OON, NPOM on the official investiture and conferment of Honour by the African Health and Medical Service award, Nigeria.

This award is a proud testament to your many years of hard work and dedication to serving humanity via your medical profession.

Cubes Consult Nig. Ltd is very proud to be associated with you on this auspicious occasion. On behalf of The Management and staff of Cubes Consult Nig. Ltd, I congratulate you on this well deserved investiture and honour.

Signed;
Arc Chijioko Egbulem FNIA
Managing Director



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Celebrates

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On Behalf of the Staff and Management of Jeida Integrated Nig Ltd, I Congratulate you,
PROFESSOR INNOCENT ACHANYA OTOBO UJAH, mni, OON, NPOM

On this occasion of your Investiture and honour as VICE CHANCELLOR OF THE YEAR
Universities of Health/Medical Sciences in Nigeria

Considering Your Remarkable and Landmark Achievements, you are without a doubt deserving
of this award.

Congratulations!

Signed:

Mr. Agada James Edache,
Managing Director

