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COMMEMORATIVE EDITION

NiTDA

CELEBRATING

20 YEARS OF GROWTH AND RESILIENCE

NiTDA

20th ANNIVERSARY

We at **Data Sciences Nigeria Limited (DSNL)**, Nigeria's first indigenous computer company incorporated in 1979 as a high technology and computer company, hereby **CONGRATULATE the entire** Management, Board of Directors and Staff of the **National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) as you mark 20 Years of Challenges and Accomplishments.**

 We wish you greater IT Regulatory & Developmental strides.

As the oldest indigenous IT company, we appreciate the pains, gains and dynamics of our industry that is perpetually in transition. Therefore, we boldly say that NITDA can count on us as a PARTNER in the goal to make Nigeria a great IT-driven country.

Once again, congratulations and continue to be a great testimonial of sterling leadership in the industry.

Signed

Management
Data Sciences Nigeria Limited
Obodex House, 237 Ikorodu Rd, Ilupeju, Lagos.
info@datascience.ng

His Excellency,
Rt. Hon. (Dr) Simon Bako Lalong
Governor, Plateau State

PICTDA

On behalf of the People of Plateau
State and His Excellency,
Rt. Hon. (Dr) Simon Bako Lalong,
KSGG, The Rescue Governor,
the Plateau State ICT Development
Agency (PICTDA) *happily extends*
this special commendation to the
Management, Board of Directors
and Staff of the National
Information Technology
Development Agency (NITDA)
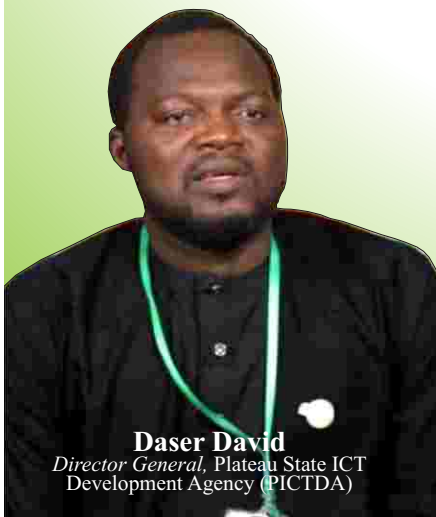*on the occasion of its*
20th Anniversary.

PICTDA particularly identifies
with the youthful leadership of
NITDA's Director General /CEO,
Mr. Kashif Inuwa Abdullahi.

Long live NITDA! Long live Plateau
State- Home of Peace and Tourism!
Long live Federal Republic of Nigeria!

Signed
Daser David
Director General, Plateau State ICT
Development Agency (PICTDA)

Daser David
Director General, Plateau State ICT
Development Agency (PICTDA)

Mr. Kashif Inuwa Abdullahi.
Director **General /CEO,** National Information
Technology Development Agency (NITDA)

NITDA at 20 is Nigeria's worthy two decades ICT journey

Perhaps, one symbolic essence of what defines the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) in 2021 is the persona of its current leadership as it relates to the character, substance and the dynamism of the global IT sector.

IT is perpetually youthful, disruptive and daring and not always 'conservatively' inclined. NITDA has done full circle to embody these traits. Once led by 'grey hairs' and pedagogues; NITDA marched through the decades with its own share of technocrats and academics; pragmatists and visionaries; strategists and younger transformational leaders.

The NITDA was established under the *NITDA Act 2007.* But as a public institution, NITDA started operations in 2001 - six years before the bill was passed into law.

This April 2021while it marks 20 years of existence as an IT regulatory and development agency, NITDA strongly manifests its evolution in policy direction, implementation and leadership.

Summarised, the agency's mandates hinged on three broad objectives: to provide advisory services, regulate and develop the IT sector. In 20 years, NITDA's activities have centred around achieving these objectives and not without challenges or hindrances.

From being considered a moribund agency at one time in its life, it has grown to become a reference institution for IT regulation and development.

Today, NITDA's story is Nigeria's journey in ICT from technology popularisation, adoption to critical deployment and now, to full steam digital economy.

NITDA has helped to define the pathway for Nigeria's ICT sector which has grown from less than 1% of GDP in 2001 to about 10% by 2018 and 17.83% by Q2 of 2020.

A 2020 report by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) indicates that ICT is doing much better than the previous quarters and out-performing other sectors including crude oil export.

As one report puts it: Nigeria, Africa's largest economy is also the continent's biggest technology market and accounts for 23 percent of internet users in Africa with 122 million people online in December 2018 (Internet World Stats, 2019).

It also has the largest number of telecommunications subscribers, with a tele-density figure of almost 90 percent (Nigerian Communications Commission, 2019). The growth of the tech sector offers new possibilities for Nigeria's growing labour force, in terms of employment and entrepreneurship.

All of these are not lost on NITDA. No person can better illustrate this than Kachifu Inuwa Abdullahi, the Director General of NITDA himself. He asserts:

"There is no doubt that there are a lot of achievements recorded by the Agency since its establishment. These achievements include huge ICT contribution to GDP from less than 0.5% in 2001 to more than 14% in 2020, catalysing job creation and igniting innovative activities in the tech ecosystem.

"Likewise, we have achieved a lot in digital inclusion and literacy. As a result, now we are witnessing the emergence of new economic sectors like Fintech, eCommerce, Venture Capital investment, Business Process Outsourcing, Data Protection Compliance Organisations, IT equipment manufacturing, and robust software industry.

"With this important milestone in carrying out our mandates, we think our 20th-anniversary worth celebrating. Since its establishment, NITDA has evolved in many aspects and responded to its mandates' dynamics.

"With years of implementing programmes targeted at building young innovators, Nigeria has become the number one start-up investment destination in Africa. In 2019, Nigerian start-ups led their African counterparts by attracting a total investment of US $747 Million, followed by Kenya with a total investment of US $564 Million, and Egypt attracted a total investment of US $211 million."

No less fundamental, since 2016, the agency has taken up the arduous task of enforcement of all government's orders and circulars as they relate to IT procurement and local content among other guidelines. The results have been outstanding.

In the words of the Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, Dr Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantam*: "One of the policies of the present administration is fighting corruption and IT project clearance is one of the strategic areas where corruption has been fought when it comes to fighting corruption in federal public institutions, IT project clearance has saved N2 billion for the federal government. There is a high level of integrity in the process of IT clearance in the country."*

NITDA's role with impact in our national life has continued to grow. In the years ahead, its responsibilities will definitely not reduce.

As the agency celebrates, we commend its founders and implore those leading it to remain steadfast in focus to the agency's vision *"to proactively facilitate the development of Nigeria into a sustainable digital economy."*

Congratulations! NITDA.

Olusegun Ohimeh Oruame
Editor

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NiTDA
CELEBRATING
20 YEARS
OF
GROWTH AND RESILIENCE

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Accra Institute of Technology, Ghana's premier Science and Technology University and one of Africa's largest private learning and research centres, heartily congratulates Nigeria's IT clearinghouse, the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) on the occasion of its 20th Anniversary.

As a pivotal and unifying centre of learning for students across Africa, including Nigeria, AIT celebrates the excellent strides in NITDA and its continuous evolution as an IT Regulator & Development Agency.

NiTDA
National Information Technology Development Agency

NITDA

National Information Development Agency

CELEBRATING

20 *YEARS*

OF

GROWTH AND RESILIENCE

"NITDA's creation symbolised our resolution to embrace digital transformation"

- Kashifu Inuwa Abdullahi

NITDA
has evolved
and responded
to its mandates'
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- Kashifu Inuwa Abdullahi
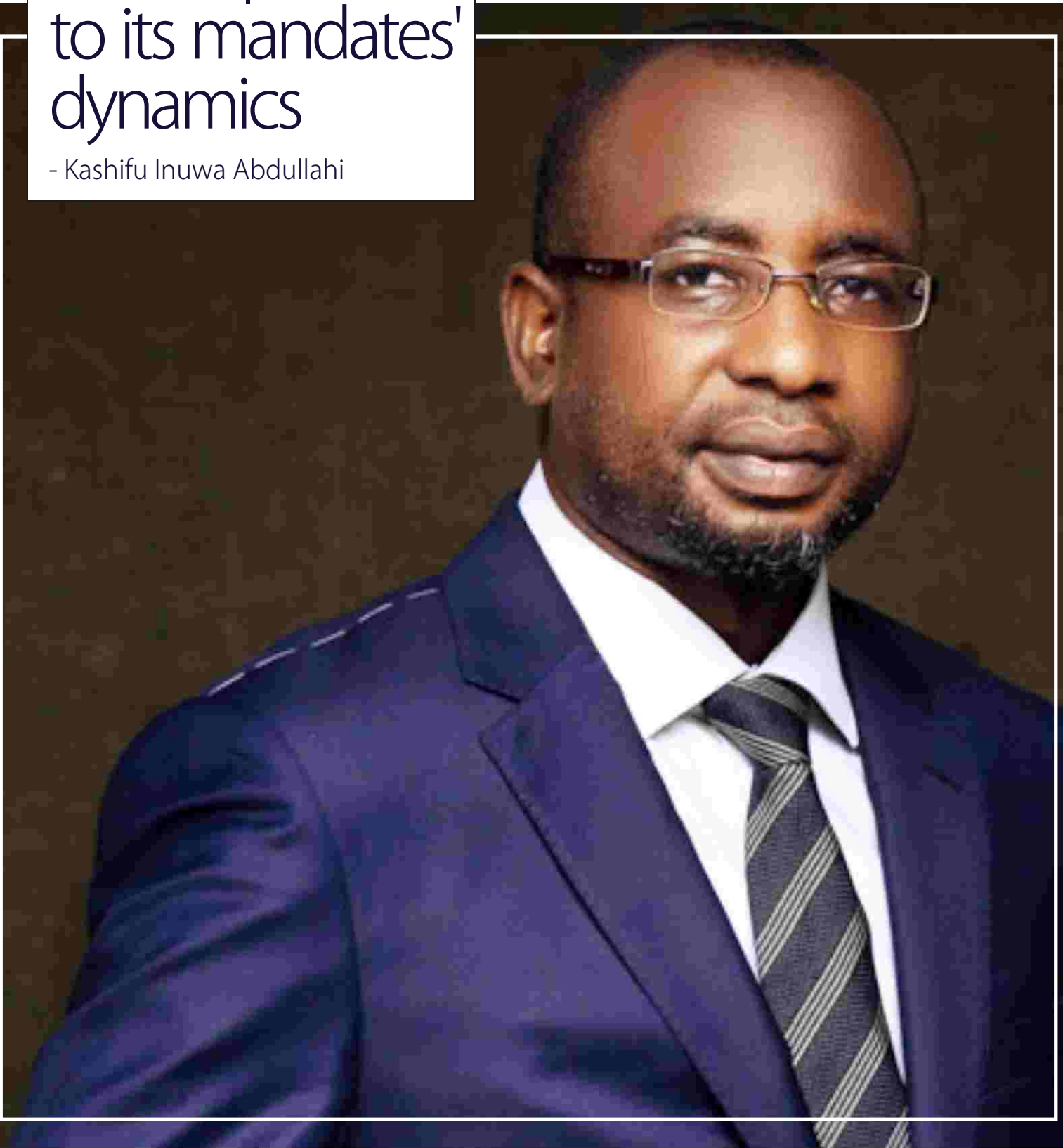
You never know what results will come from your action. But if you do nothing, there will be no results
- Mahatma Gandhi

I am super excited to address you today at this historic event to mark the 20th anniversary of establishing the National Information Technology Development Agency, NITDA. This is a huge milestone for every Nigerian because NITDA's creation symbolised our resolution to embrace digital transformation. The story of NITDA explains Nigeria's journey to a digital economy. The journey is slow but a quintessential evolution into a Digital Nigeria despite the many daunting challenges we faced.

NITDA was established in April 2001, to be precise, on the 18th of April 2001, following the Federal Executive Council's approval of the National Information Technology Policy in March 2001. Consequently, the National Assembly passed into law the NITDA Act, 2007, which mandates the Agency to regulate, develop, and advise on Information Technology practices in Nigeria.

Ever since, NITDA has been working assiduously to help Nigeria catch the train of the 4th industrial revolution without leaving any sector of the economy behind. The Agency has played critical roles in national development by providing the legal framework for information technology development, pioneering IT developmental projects,

facilitating access to information technology goods and services, catalysing job creation and ensuring national security.

I am happy to say that NITDA has substantially actualised the National IT Policy's goal to digitise Nigeria and the Agency is now in the phase of digitalising the country. What is the difference between digitisation and digitalisation? Digitisation means using IT to enhance traditional processes. In comparison, digitalisation means using IT to deliver new value propositions through innovation. It is about taking advantage of IT as a source of inspiration and strategic national economic, security and social platform.

On the 23rd of October 2019, based on the digitalisation objective, President Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR, approved the re-designation of our Ministry as the Federal Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy. The primary purpose of the re-designation was to create a policy framework that would oversee the development of the digital economy for a digital Nigeria. Subsequently, on the 28th of November 2019, the President unveiled the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS) to facilitate the diversification of our economy and position Nigeria to tap from the $11.5trillion global digital

economy worth. NITDA is playing pivotal roles to actualise the objectives of the NDEPS as it had done with the National IT Policy.

There is no doubt that there are a lot of achievements recorded by the Agency since its establishment. These achievements include huge ICT contribution to GDP from less than 0.5% in 2001 to more than 14% in 2020, catalysing job creation and igniting innovative activities in the tech ecosystem. Likewise, we have achieved a lot in digital inclusion and literacy. As a result, now we are witnessing the emergence of new economic sectors like Fintech, eCommerce, Venture Capital investment, Business Process Outsourcing, Data Protection Compliance Organisations, IT equipment manufacturing, and robust software industry.

With this important milestone in carrying out our mandates, we think our 20th-anniversary is worth celebrating. Since its establishment, NITDA has evolved in many aspects and responded to its mandates' dynamics. You may be aware that the Agency's mandates are to achieve three broad objectives mainly. To provide advisory services, regulate and develop the Information Technology Sector. Therefore, the Agency focuses on bridging the digital divide, providing the enabling environment and strengthening the tech ecosystem. In 2007, we started our developmental interventions by deploying ten (10) Rural Information Technology Resource Centre (RITC) across the country's six Geo-Political zones. The number increased to 17 in 2008, 58 in 2009, and 119 in 2010.

With increased awareness of the Agency's intervention, demand-specific interventions were developed. These includes Community Access Venues

(CACs), Knowledge Access Venues (KAVs), Digital Capacity Building Centres (DCBCs), Digital Job Creation Centres (DJCCs), Digital Divide Bridging Centres (DDBCs), Digital Economy Centres (DECs), IT Infrastructure for Higher Institutions, Wide Area Network for Higher Institutions, Virtual Library, IT Innovation and Incubation Parks, IT Community Training Centres, IT Innovation Hubs, and IT Skills Acquisition and Computer-Based Testing Centres.

From inception to date, you will be glad to know that the Agency has deployed over one thousand, five hundred and sixty (1,560) Centres across the country, with a minimum of two Centres in each of the 774 Local Government Areas of the country.

Another critical area of focus for the Agency was Capacity Building. This started with, Train-the-Trainer programme for Lecturers in Tertiary Institutions. It then grew into having special programmes for Women, People Living with Disabilities, Military and Paramilitary, Public Officers, students, NYSC, Artisans, Primary School Children and now having various programmes delivered online through the NITDA Academy for Research and Training. So far, the Agency has impacted over 2.5 Million Nigerians directly and/or indirectly in multiple areas

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To provide advisory services, regulate and develop the Information Technology Sector. Therefore, the Agency focuses on bridging the digital divide, providing the enabling environment and strengthening the tech ecosystem.*
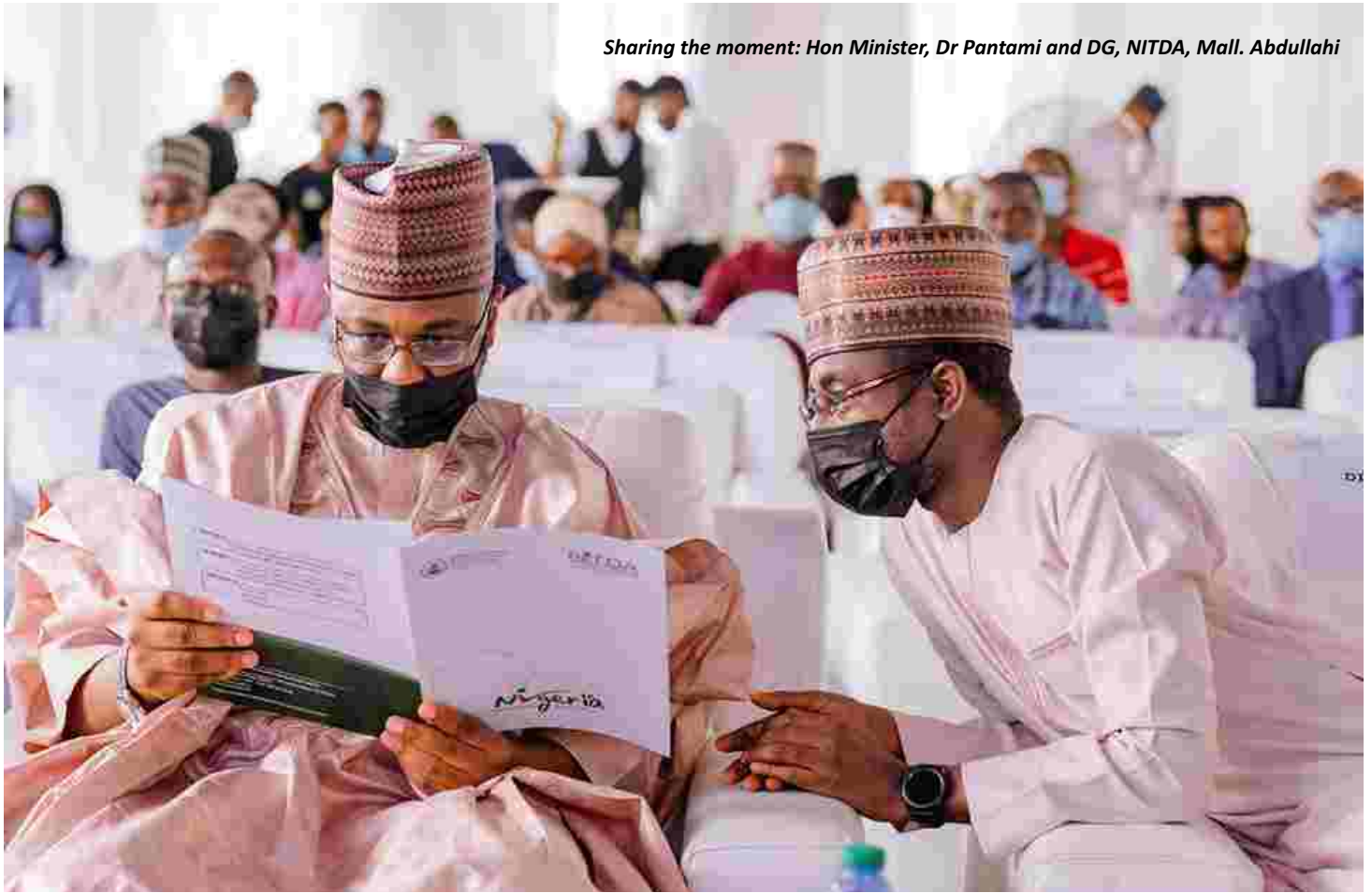
of IT through its interventions and training.

It is worth noting that from September 2016 to date, the Agency has witnessed an unprecedented improvement in its activities, especially in the area of regulation. Upon assumption of office, my Boss and Mentor, Dr Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami, FNCS, FBCS, FIIM, the then Director-General and now the Honourable Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, he instituted strategic planning and crafted the Agency's Strategic Roadmap, 2017-2020. The Roadmap was anchored on seven (7) pillars: IT Regulations, Local Content Development and Promotion, Cyber Security, Government Digital Service Promotion, Digital Job Creation, Digital Inclusion, and Capacity Building. The Roadmap shaped and created a direction for the Agency's activities and immensely contributed to the unprecedented achievements.

To illustrate this, you may recall that series of Regulatory Instruments were issued in 2019. These include:

1. The Rule-Making Process Regulation of NITDA;
2. The Nigerian Data Protection Regulation;
3. Guideline for the Clearance of Information Technology Projects in Federal Public Institutions;
4. Guidelines for Public Internet Access;
5. Framework for the use of Social Media in Public Institutions;
6. Guidelines for Nigerian Content Development in Information and Communications Technology as amended;
7. Nigeria e-Government Interoperability Framework (Ne-GIF);
8. Nigeria ICT Innovation and Entrepreneurship Vision (NIIEV);
9. Nigeria Cloud Computing Policy; and
10. Framework and Guidelines for ICT Adoption in Tertiary Intuitions.

Some of the Regulatory Instruments were operational before their release. For example, the enforcement of the IT Clearance Process of NITDA started in December 2016. In addition to the value of IT project delivery, the IT Clearance has saved over 22.45 billion Naira for the Federal Government.

Similarly, with the release of the Nigeria Data Protection Regulation (NDPR), NITDA has created a new industry, stimulated new business models, and empowered thousands of Nigerians through capacity building and skills development. We licensed 72 Data Protection
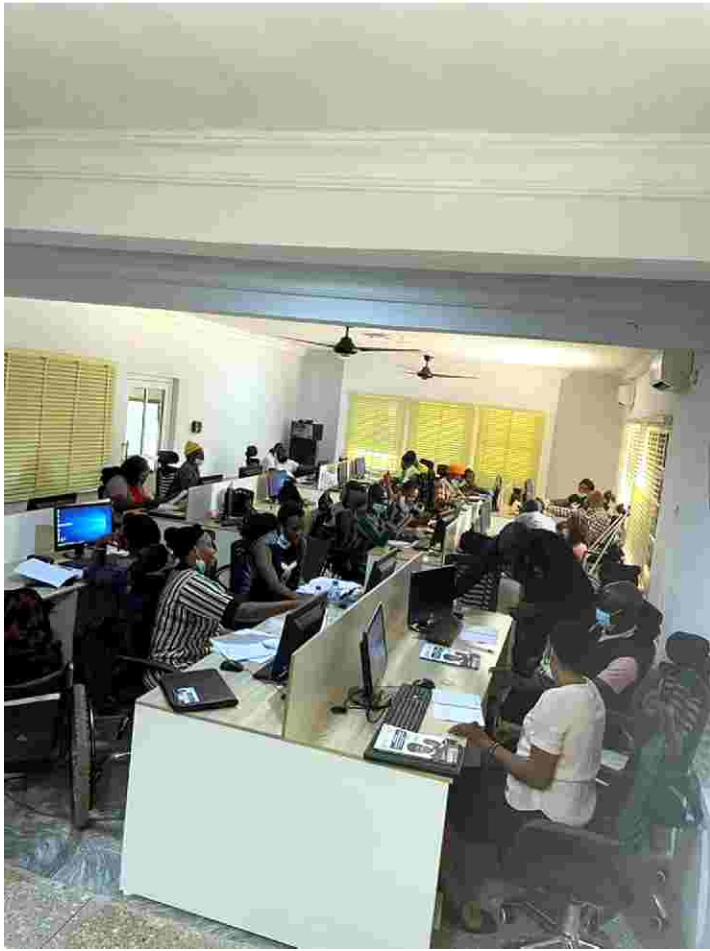
> ❝ NITDA has been working assiduously to help Nigeria catch the train of the 4th industrial revolution without leaving any sector of the economy behind. The Agency has played critical roles in national development. ❞

Compliance Organizations (DPCOs), created over 2,686 new jobs roles in the industry, developed a new data protection sector valued at around 2.2 billion Naira.

The Agency has also successfully investigated and issued data breach fines to many organisations, including public institutions. More importantly, other countries are looking up to the Agency for guidance on Data Protection Regulation.

You may also be aware that the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy for a Digital Nigeria (NDEPS) replaced the National IT Policy. Therefore, with the expiration of NITDA's Strategic Roadmap 2017 2020, we have developed a new Strategic Roadmap in line with NDEPS, which will be unveiled next week.

Other success stories you may be aware of include:
1. Rebranding the Agency in line with NDEPS vision;
2. Forging National and International Collaboration and Partnership with critical stakeholders;
3. Establishment of the National Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics (NCAIR); and
4. Commencement of the Development of the National Digital Innovation and Entrepreneurship Centre.

Gentlemen of the Press, these are few of the several achievements recorded in just 20 years of the Agency's existence. These wouldn't have been possible without the strategic leadership of our founding fathers, the previous Chief Executive Officers of the Agency, and the active support of our parent ministry, governing board of the Agency, management, and the entire staff. I want to therefore use this opportunity to congratulate all for seeing this day.

My appreciation goes to President Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR, for his unwavering support to the Digital Economy, my Boss and Mentor, the Honourable Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, Dr Isa Ali Ibrahim (Pantami), FNCS, FBCS, FIIM, MCPN for his continued guidance and support, Members of NITDA Governing Board, Management and staff for their commitment, loyalty and dedication to work. Our special appreciation to you, our distinguished guest from sister organisations under the Ministry and members of the Press, for your partnership. Without you, our stories cannot be interesting.

Please note that we have series of activities lined up from today to Friday, the 30th of April 2021. As I thank you for being here today, I look forward to welcoming you again to the series of activities lined up for the celebration.

Today, we celebrate what we have accomplished in 20 years, but next week, we will unveil our new strategy to raise the bar a little higher to help us do more before our silver jubilee anniversary.

Thank you for listening, and may God Almighty bless you.

God Bless NITDA.
God Bless the Federal Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy.
God Bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.
19th APRIL 2021

The 20th Anniversary remarks by Mallam Kashifu Inuwa Abdullahi, CCIE, Director General/CEO, National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), during the NITDA @20 Anniversary Conference held today, Monday, 19th April, 2021.

ATCON

Association of Telecommunications Companies of Nigeria

The President, National Council Members and teeming members of ATCON congratulate the **Management, Board of Directors and Staff of the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA)** on the 20th Anniversary of the Agency and specially commend the great things being done by its **Director General/CEO, Mr. Kashifu Inuwa Abdullahi**

May **NITDA** continue to grow in leaps and bounds under your leadership

Please accept my congratulations sir.

Engr. Ikechukwu Nnamani,
President, ATCON

Signed on behalf of the National Executive Council of the Association of Telecommunications Companies of Nigeria (ATCON)

NITDA:
Two decades of efficiently driving technology development

By Samson Oyediran
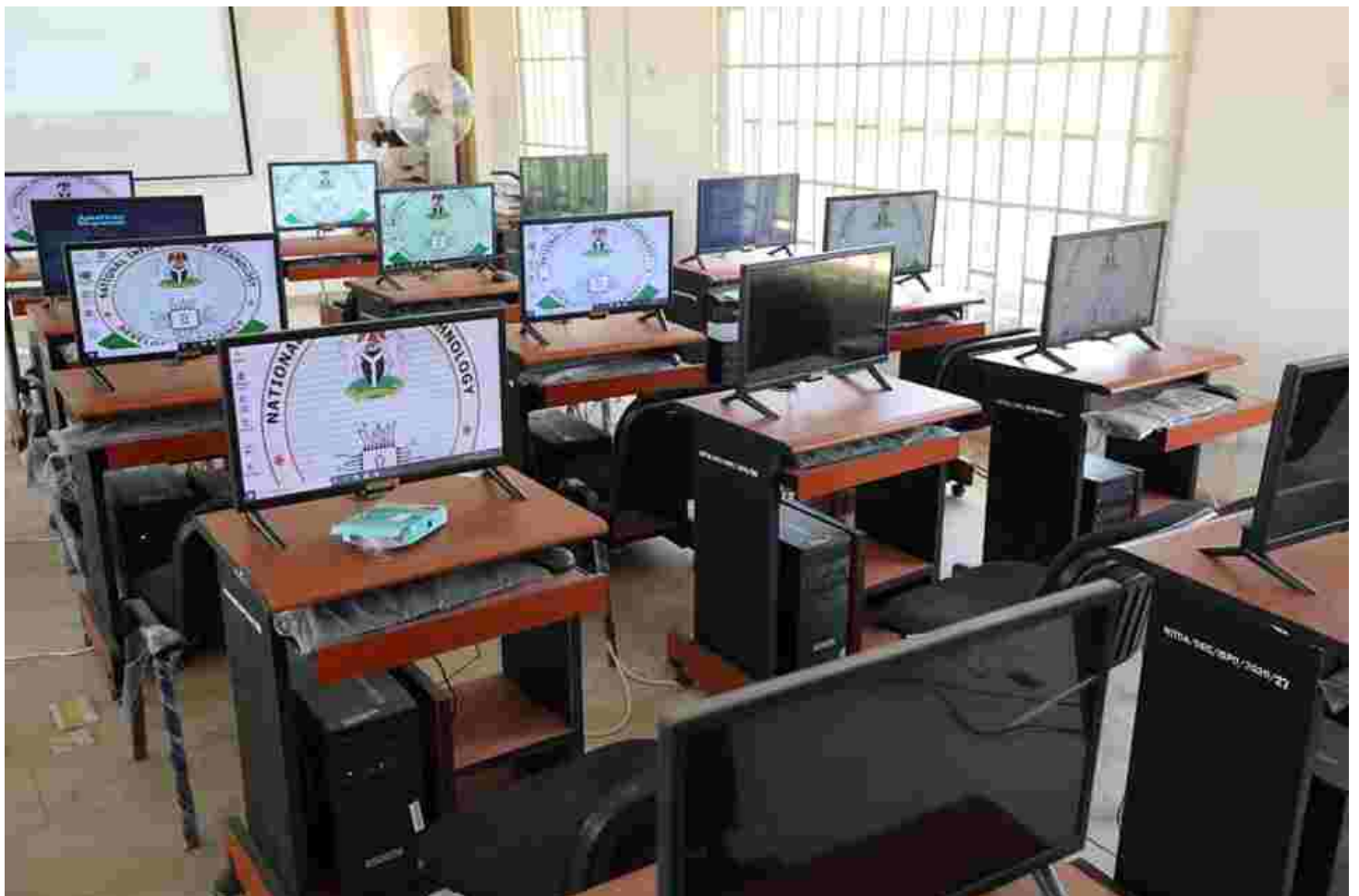
The National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) is one agency of the government that has lived up to its name and stayed true to its mandates over the years. Twenty years down the line, the Agency has proven that indeed Nigeria could become a reference point in the technology world that makes meaningful contributions to technology developments for the benefit of the whole world.

Today, Nigeria is not just on the world's map as a haven for technology start-ups, it has become one of the most attractive markets for global investors looking for profitable innovative products solving the world's problems to put their funds in.

Aside from training, start-up empowerment programmes, and scholarships for Nigerian students to hone their skills in foreign institutions, NITDA over the last 20 years continued to raise the bar in entrenching the technology culture in government circles. Its efficient and effective regulation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Nigeria continues to reflect in the increasing contributions of ICT to the Gross Domestic Products (GDP) of Nigeria year-on-year.

ICT Centres Established	950
Scholarships Awards	467
Disability Training	250

The beginning

NITDA was created in April 2001 to implement the Nigerian Information Technology Policy and coordinate general IT development in the country. The Act establishing it (National Information Technology Development Act 2007) mandates the Agency to create a framework for the planning, research, development, standardisation, application, coordination, monitoring, evaluation, and regulation of Information Technology practices, activities, and systems in Nigeria.

Based on the mandates, the Agency's role, therefore, is to develop, regulate and advise on Information technology in the country through regulatory standards, guidelines, and policies. Additionally, NITDA is the clearinghouse for all IT projects and infrastructural development in the country. It is the prime Agency for e-government implementation, Internet governance, and general IT development in Nigeria.

With a vision to "proactively facilitate the development of Nigeria into a sustainable digital economy", and the mission of "creating an enabling environment where Nigerians develop, adopt and derive value from digital technology", NITDA has always demonstrated its readiness to actualise its mammoth

⟪ Leading by example, NITDA had been unequivocal in its directive to all Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) that patronage of home-made, that is, made-in-Nigeria ICT products and services is non-negotiable. As the government's clearinghouse for technology purchase, this presupposes that no MDA should put forward any request for foreign (ICT) products or services unless such is not available in Nigeria ⟫

mandate through strategic and inclusive stakeholder management, local and international partnership and efficient utilisation of resources in the interest of Nigeria.

Capacity building

Over the years, NITDA has been training Nigerians across all strata and investing in researches to increase the country's knowledge base in ICT innovations, especially in the area of software development. The NITDA Act mandated the agency to proactively assist Nigerian companies to improve their processes and product quality, a task NITDA has judiciously executed through its initiatives of training and re-training programmes, which many Nigerians have benefitted from. NITDA's training focus can also be seen in the establishment of technology incubation programs, start-up communities, ICT clusters, and other IT development networks, which are been used to stimulate the growth of the sector. In the quest to build ICT capacity across the broad spectrum of Nigerian society, NITDA had in recent times organised training for legislators as well as lecturers in the nation's universities. These pieces of training are aside from the regular training programmes and scholarships for youths and undergraduates which the agency undertakes periodically across the country.

The purpose of the training for legislatures, according to NITDA, is to ensure that the legislative arm of government is well equipped with necessary ICT tools to enhance their duties and also increase output. The main aim of its ICT training for government officials in general, it's said to assist in transforming government processes, thereby enhancing the pace of national development.

Driving e-governance

In the current digital era, the effective use of ICT services in government administration, or e-Governance, has become imperative to enhance existing efficiencies, reduce communication costs and increase transparency in the functioning of various departments. It is against this backdrop that NITDA has taken up the challenge of infusing technology into governance in Nigeria.

While providing all the necessary incentives to encourage the use of information technology in all spheres of life in the country, NITDA has been the key driver of e-government in Nigeria as it continues to show commitment to the set objective of developing e-Government at every level. The consistency of NITDA towards ensuring that government and its agencies adopt a transparent and open way of doing business is believed to have saved the government a huge amount of money.

From policy initiation to policy implementation

Through a policy of education, encouragement, training, and deployment of appropriate technical know-how, NITDA has moved away from the era of policy initiation to implementation. Today, e-Government is catching on in the operations of government and how it interfaces with the people through various tools like travel documents, voting arrangements, national identification, drivers' license, etc.

NITDA's e-governance efforts are in fulfillment of the NITDA Act 2007, which inter alia, mandates the agency to "develop guidelines for electronic governance and monitor the use of electronic data interchange and other forms of electronic communication transactions as an alternative to paper-based methods in government, commerce, education, the private and public sectors, labour, and other fields, where the use of electronic communication may improve the exchange of data and information." The agency is also saddled with the responsibility of creating incentives to promote the use of information technology in all spheres of life in Nigeria including the development of guidelines for setting up information technology systems and knowledge parks.

Promoting local content

Interestingly, while building local capacity through training, NITDA has also been pushing for the development of local content in ICTs to drive the growth of local tech firms. To this end, the agency had developed full policy guidelines to guide ICT local content development in Nigeria. The agency had gone further to establish a full-fledged office to drive the implementation of local content guideline to assist in promoting the brand Nigeria ICT products and services.

According to the incumbent Director General of NITDA, Mr. KashifuInuwa Abdullahi, NITDA has demonstrated great support and has ensured improved patronage of indigenous OEMs over the years.

"It is a fact that the purchase of local devices by MDAs is unprecedented within the last three years compared to previous years before 2018. For instance, in 2015-2016 less than 250,000 devices were sold by indigenous OEMs.

"However, due to the intervention of NITDA, records show that in 2018/2019 alone OEMs sold three times the numbers sold prior to 2017 with about 778,886 locally assembled devices sold in 2018 and 2019.

Leading by example, NITDA had been unequivocal in its directive to all Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) that patronage of home-made, that is, made-in-Nigeria ICT products and services is non-negotiable. As the government's clearinghouse for technology purchase, this presupposes that no MDA should put forward any request for foreign (ICT) products or services

> **Demonstrating its determination to see local content grow, just last year, NITDA sanctioned 125 government MDAs for violating the guidelines on indigenous ICT content development. The Agency sanctioned the MDAs based on relevant laws having failed to comply with the government's rules on local content.**

unless such is not available in Nigeria.

Not just that, the Agency has also been encouraging the country's local brands, the software developers, the original equipment manufacturers (OEMs), to ensure that they scale up the standards of their products and services.

Demonstrating its determination to see local content grow, just last year, NITDA sanctioned 125 government MDAs for violating the guidelines on indigenous ICT content development.According to the DG, Inuwa Abdullahi, the Agency sanctioned the MDAs based on relevant laws having failed to comply with the government's rules on local content. He said that NITDA had also audited IT systems, processes, digital services, and capabilities of about 100 MDAs to assess their digital transformation readiness and advise them on future
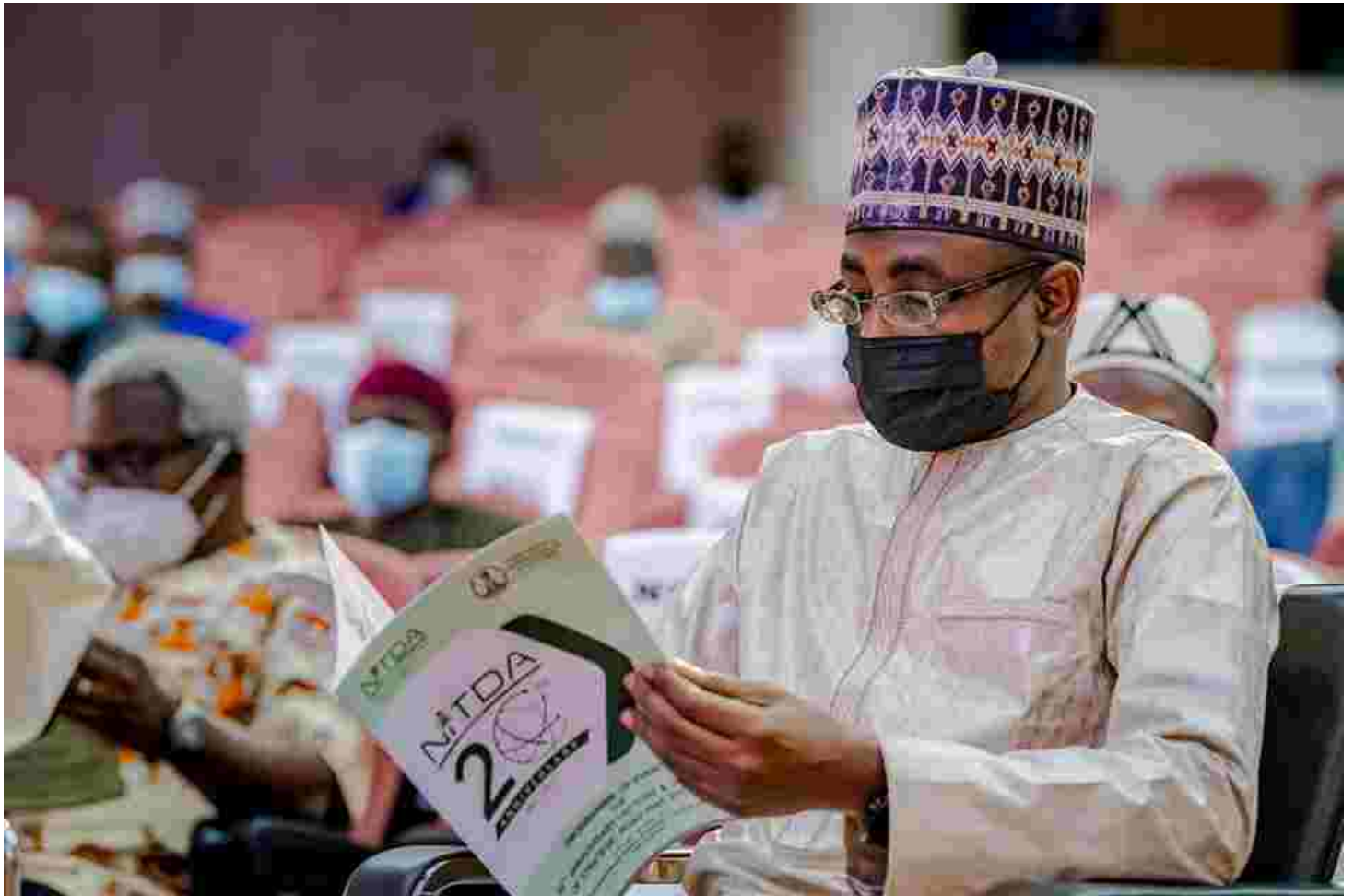
IT investment in line with the National Digital Economy Policy for Digital Nigeria.

Enforcing IT clearance rule
In addition to that, NITDA has been enforcing its IT clearance rule, which has to do with clearing all MDAs investments in IT. In the last year, Inuwa Abdullahi disclosed that the Agency had cleared about 56 organisations thereby saving a lot of money for the government.

"We have saved more than N4 billion within this period. And also, we focus more on integrations because we are talking about digitising government services," the NITDA's boss declared.

Supporting the digital economy
Before the pandemic, NITDA under the leadership of the immediate past Director-General, Dr. Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami, who is now the Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, and the incumbent Director General, Mr. Kashifu Inuwa Abdullahi, had been galvanising technology for the development of the economy.

And even before the re-designation of the Federal Ministry of Communications to include Digital Economy,

NITDA has achieved a lot in supporting the government's digital economy vision through the implementation of a roadmap for the development of the Nigerian IT sector.

The roadmap consists of seven pillars that are in alignment with the 8 pillars of the Digital Economy Policy & Strategy and the Nigeria IT Policy.

For instance, in promoting a digital Nigeria, NITDA from August 2019 to date has launched and is implementing regulatory instruments such as the Nigeria e-Government Interoperability Framework (Ne-GIF); Nigeria Cloud Computing Policy (NCCP); Nigeria ICT Innovation and Entrepreneurship Vision (NIIEV); Framework and Guidelines for ICT adoption in Tertiary Institutions; Guidelines for Nigeria Content Development ICT as amended; and Data Protection Implementation Framework.

Highlighting other efforts of the Agency, the DG, Inuwa Abdullahi, who clocked one year in office in August last year, stated: "We have different IT project interventions that we have carried out across the country in the last one year, which include 80 Digital Capacity Training Centres (DCTCs) with E-Learning facilities, six IT Hubs, six IT Community Centres, four IT Innovation & Incubation

Parks, and three IT Capacity Training Centres all to bridge the digital divide and provide access to the unserved and underserved population."

To consolidate these efforts, NITDA had also come up with a series of initiatives aimed at providing a conducive environment and support for the Start-up Ecosystem. These include the NITDA Technology Innovation and Entrepreneurship Support Scheme, which is targeting start-ups hub owners and youth with talent and building their skills in high-demand skills; Policies such as Tax Incentives for start-ups, incentives for investors, and access to the market for innovation adoption; Establishment of Innovation and Research Fund to further catalyse the growth of start-ups; Development of an Innovation Portal to monitor the activities of the ecosystem; FinTech software, which is already exported; and the establishment of the Tech4COVID19 Initiative to measure the impact of COVID-19 on the tech ecosystem and proffer solutions, especially for start-ups.

Not only that, but NITDA has also lived up to its mandate in the COVID-19 era to drive the 'new normal' and sustain the economy. According to Mr. Inuwa Abdullahi, NITDA has launched several initiatives to ensure that technology continues to enable business continuity.

One of such efforts, he said, is the Tech4COVID19 Initiative. "The Committee we setup has come up with a Strategic Plan to ensure we retain about 100,000 ICT jobs and create an additional 30,000 in the post COVID-19 era," Inuwa Abdullahi said.

Start-up support

With years of implementing programmes targeted at building young innovators, Nigeria has become the number one start-up investment destination in Africa. In 2019, Nigerian start-ups led their African counterpartsby attracting a total investment of US $747 Million, followed by Kenya with a total investment of US $564 Million, and Egypt attracted a total investment of US $211 Million.

To consolidate on this gain, InuwaAbdullahi said that NITDA had come up with a series of initiatives aimed at providing a conducive environment and support for the Start-up Ecosystem. These include the NITDA Technology Innovation and Entrepreneurship Support Scheme, which is targeting start-ups hub owners and youth with talent and building their skills in high-demand skills; Policies such as Tax Incentives for start-ups, incentives for investors, and access to the market for innovation adoption; Establishment of Innovation and Research Fund to further catalyse the growth of start-ups; Development of an Innovation Portal to monitor the activities of the ecosystem; FinTech software, which is already exported; and the establishment of the Tech4COVID19 Initiative to measure the impact of COVID-19 on the tech ecosystem and proffer solutions,

especially for start-ups.

Another initiative in that regard is the Virtual Start-up Clinic, where start-ups gather, mostly young people to meet with mentors, successful entrepreneurs, investors, industry specialists, business consultants, and hub operators with the goal of solving problems and challenges they are facing.

New industry created

By being proactive in its regulatory approach, the Agency was able to successfully midwife the birth of Nigeria data protection industry ahead of other African countries under the leadership of the immediate past DG of NITDA, Dr. Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami. NITDA led Nigeria to instigate a new era on the continent having been able to develop its regulation on data protection ahead of many countries: the Nigeria Data Protection Regulation (NDPR) 2019 - it is appreciatedtoday as one of the best data protection instruments in Africa.

Essentially, through the licensing of data protection compliance Organisations (DPCOs), a new industry creating thousands of jobs for Nigerians was formed, thanks to the foresightedness of NITDA's leadership.

As at today, NITDA under Inuwa Abdullahi has licensed 104 dataprotection compliance organisations and they have been working to ensure statutory compliance to theNDPR by companies or organisations whether private or public handling citizens' data in Nigeria.

According to Inuwa Abdullahi, NITDA's idea of regulation is developmental because it is not to stifle innovation, rather unlock opportunities.According to him, "through the DPCOs,we have created a new industry, which is the data industry. This is because data is the oil ofdigital economy; it powers almost everything we do in the digital economy. This new set of professionals we created are helping us to make sure our citizens, our businesses comply with the best global practice in terms of data security, because for you to be globally competitive, you need to have the functional skills in the digital economy to guaranty secured data. We have created more than 1,500 jobs and we have licensed organisations to do this job."

Conclusion

The last 20 years of NITDA have, no doubt, been eventful and impactful. There have been challenges, but in all ramifications, the agency has lived up to its name and matched up to fulfill its mandates in grand style even as it forges ahead to bequeath Nigeria a technologically developed society.

While the current Director General, the youngest in NITDA's history, has been working assiduously to sustain the good legacy of the Agency and build on the successes of its past leadership, every achievement of the past years give further assurance of a brighter and rewarding future for ICTs in Nigeria.

NITDA @ 20: The success story of an ICT Trojan

By Bode Michael

Building partnership: NITDA's DG, Abdullahi with military functionaries

When the idea of technological development was first mooted, little did those who conceived the idea of the National Information Development Agency (NITDA) knew it was going to grow to be the engine room for the development of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector in the country.

As it turned out, the agency has become one of the vehicles for the propagation and the growth of ICT in Nigeria as it has done more to spread the gospel of ICT in the country than most institutions. For stakeholders, the birth of NITDA was a good omen for the ICT sector and the country in general.

One of the outstanding attributes of NITDA as it turned 20 this year is the resilience of its leadership, notably in the last five years, comparable to the defenders of ancient Troy; and in the case of NITDA, to keep the light of IT regulation and development going, it has been no easy task.

Celebrating 20 Years of 'Growth and Resilience' for NITDA will be to recount milestone through two decades a Trojan journey to develop and sustain Nigeria as the epicentre of ICT in Africa with NITDA at the driving seat.

A brief history of NITDA reveals that it was established by the government of former President Olusegun Obasanjo on 18 April, 2001. Incidentally, it was the same Obasanjo government that brought the Global

NITDA: A QUICK GLANCE

NITDA 2001-2010

2001- 2010	Achievements	Achievements	Achievements
	• Public Service IT Awareness	Mobile Internet Units	Establishment of Rural Internet Technology Centres (RITCs) across the country
	• Securing .ng Domain	Development and deployment of Public Service Network (PSNet)	NEPAD e-School Initiative and the Computers for All Nigerians Initiative (CANI) in partnership with Local OEMs to provide computers to Public Servants with a payment plan
	• Commencement of Development of the National IT Strategic Action Plan (ICT4D)	• Computer Emergency Readiness and Response Team (CERRT) unit	• Developed ICT for Development (ICT4D) plan in partnership with UNECA and approved by the FEC
	• Establishment of Rural Internet Resource Centres (RIRCs)	• Introduction of e-government into the Nigerian public service that included the process for establishing IT departments across the public service	• Establishment of Standards and Guidelines Department which began the process of drafting Guidelines and Policies
	• First licensing of Local Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs)	• Finalised the establishment of the Nigeria Internet Registration Association (NIRA) an institutional mechanism to manage .ngTLD	• NITDA Postgraduate Scholarship Programme began

NITDA's Achievement in National Data Protection Regulation

- Set up the Data Breach Investigation Team (DBIT) and Partnership with the Nigerian Police Force enforcement
- Issuance of working NDPR implementation framework
- Licensed 104 Data Protection Compliance Organizations (DPCOs) www.ndpr.nitda.gov.ng
- Provision of Guidelines for Management of Personal Data by Public Institutions
- 230 Compliance and Enforcement Notices; 8 Data Breach cases and imposed 1st Data Breach Fine in Nigeria
- Nigeria Data Protection Regulation Training
- NDPR Audit market values @ N2, 2B (N2, 295,240,000)
- Created 2686 jobs via NDPR implementation

NITDEF SCHOLARSHIP Since 2011

37 MSc	247 MSc	24 PhD
6 PhD		
2011	2012 2019	2012 2019
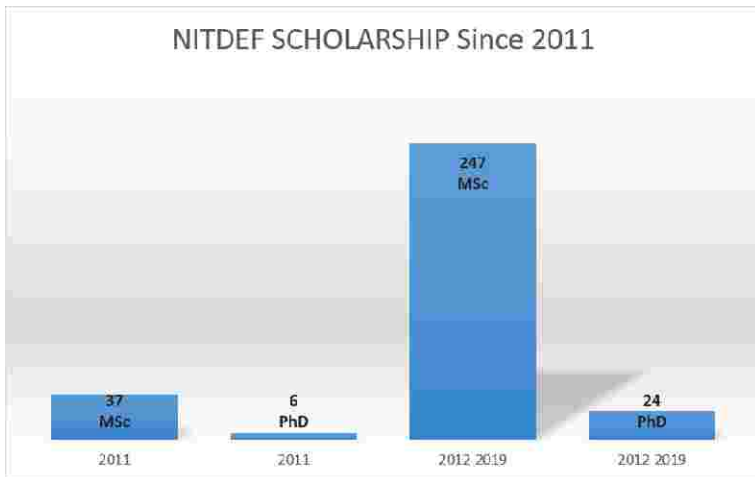
MDAs Purchase of Local Devices 2015-2019

Internet Deployment · Training of Lecturers · NITDA's IMPACTS ON TERTIARY EDUCATION · Virtual Library · Post Graduate Scholarship

NITDA'S INITIATIVE ON STARTUP ECOSYSTEM

NITDA's Technology Innovation and Entrepreneurship Support Scheme	Virtual Startups Clinic for Networking, Gathering, mentorship, and Connextion	Tax Incentives for Startups	Incentives for Startups Investors
Establishment of Innovation and Research Fund to further catalyse the growth of startups	Development of an Innovation Portal to monitor the activities of the ecosystem	Annual International Exposure of the Startups @ GITEX	Tech4COVID19 Initiative to measure the impact of COVID-19 on the tech ecosystem and proffer solutions, especially for startups

Capacity Building Programmes

1. IT Programs and Systems Skills
2. Skill Acquisition Programme
3. NDPR Training
4. Over 51 Active Courses
5. Over 47768 Active Training Sessions
6. Over 48052 Active Students
7. 10 Plus Instructors

Security, Digital Services Promotion, Innovation. Artisans Training and Entrepreneurship

System of Mobile Communication (GSM) to Nigeria because without the GSM, it would have been difficult to reap the gains of full telecommunications services in Nigeria.

The previous government of General Sani Abacha was not interested in that sector even when smaller countries like the Benin Republic had started using GSM as far back as 2005. Now at 20, NITDA has become a behemoth to be cherished by all stakeholders in Nigeria and beyond, throwing back encomiums to the founding fathers of this foremost agency with all the achievements it has garnered over the years.

Therefore, when things were taking shape, the government in its wisdom thought it wise to bring some other agencies on board to propagate and develop the ICT sector in the country. Today, it is without gainsaying that the ICT sector has grown exponentially to becoming the engine of most businesses and in fact, in itself creating jobs and opportunities for millions of Nigerians alike. NITDA has been part of the success story the ICT has been in Nigeria for more than 20 years now.

NITDA is a public service institution established by the NITDA Act 2007 as the ICT policy implementing arm of the Federal Ministry of Communication of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It has sole responsibility of developing programmes that cater to the running of ICT related activities in the country.

NITDA is also mandated with the implementation of policies guideline for driving ICT in Nigeria. It plays advisory role in copyright law by verification and revision of applicable laws in tandem with the application of software and technology acquisition. Majority of these activities are achieved through organisation of workshops, which cater for training needs of her staff, government functionaries and education sectors.

The agency's role, therefore, is to develop Information technology in Nigeria through the use of regulatory instruments. As a regulatory Agency, NITDA is the clearinghouse for all Government Information Technology projects and infrastructural development in the country.

The priorities of the Agency are Developmental Regulation, Digital Literacy and Skills, Solid Infrastructure, Service Infrastructure, Digital Services Development and Promotion, Software Infrastructure, Digital Society and Emerging Technologies & Indigenous Content Development and Adoption.

The instruments are designed to achieve the Information Technology policy objectives by providing frameworks within which to implement policies.

It must be noted that the functions of NITDA are different from that of the Nigerian Communications

❚Celebrating 20 Years of 'Growth and Resilience' for NITDA will be to recount a Trojan journey to develop and sustain Nigeria as the epicentre of ICT in Africa with NITDA at the driving seat.❚

Commission (NCC), but the agency is under the same purview but not in contention with the NCC as both are under the Ministry of Communications.

NITDA has published several instruments and monitors their compliance for the development of information technology in Nigeria. The instruments serve as a minimum benchmark in the development and implementation of information technology in Nigeria and enforceable by law. The instruments are being reviewed frequently due to the dynamic nature of the ICT environment and technology innovations.

It was possible for some non-industry watchers to underestimate the functions and importance of NITDA. Such people could be excused in the scheme of things because they were not in the know as to the effectiveness and sense of purpose of the agency in the ICT sector in Nigeria. A look at the various projects and initiatives of the agency would show how far it has gone in its bid to ensure that the ICT sector is made virile and indispensable to the country.

NITDA: Maximising transparency and accountability in ICT Procurement

NITDA as the clearing House of ICT Projects in Nigeria has been mandated to clear all ICT Projects in line with the policy objectives of the Federal Government, to maximise transparency and accountability in carrying out ICT Projects by public institutions. Consequently, the Federal Government issued a Circular No SGF/6/S.19/T/65 on 18th April 2006 directing all Public Institutions planning to embark on any IT project to obtain clearance from NITDA.

NITDA: Empowering the physically challenged; making schools go smart

The realisation that over the years, the public funds that were spent on ICT projects were not commensurate with the value derived from such Projects and had also failed to evolve a digitally-enabled public service that will advance the citizens' yearnings of digital economy, hence the need to strategically reposition the deployment of ICT Products and Services in Public Institutions. It is therefore imperative to ensure that maximum value is derived from such huge investment of public funds, especially at a time when the need for accountability, transparency, efficiency and effectiveness is eminent. The efficient implementation of this mandate by NITDA has assisted in the harmonisation of the implementation of ICT projects within the public institutions, reduction in the cost of ICT project execution and duplication, development of the local ICT market in volume of trade and content and ensuring accurate statistics as regards ICT assets for the government. Indeed, this has been one of the greatest achievements of NITDA in the last three years.

NDPR: A new data industry, massive job creation and high skill sets

The agency as part of its mandate began the Nigerian Data Protection Regulation which provides that, a Data Protection Compliance Organisation (DPCO) are duly licensed by NITDA for the purpose of training, auditing, consulting and rendering services aimed at ensuring compliance with this Regulation or any foreign Data Protection law or regulation having effect in Nigeria.

Domain registration, software testing and certification and registration of contractors among many other areas are part of the designations of NITDA. And to those who are in the know, the agency, has been forthcoming in all of these areas.

Apart from these aforementioned functions, NITDA has also come forward in the creation of jobs, empowerment of start-ups in the ICT and in many other areas of endeavours in the country.

NITDA: Empowering the youth

I am proud to see that we have through the NDPR, 2,686 job roles, thereby creating massive opportunities for young Nigerians to be recruited as Data Protection Officers, Data Protection Compliance Organisations, Compliance officers among others.

"The DPCOs have also earned over N2 billion in the first year of implementation. This is the intent of our digital economy policy-empowering Nigerians in a way that ensures global competitiveness," he said. According to the minister, NDPR is part of the implementation of National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS) which has eight pillars Developmental Regulation; Digital Literacy & Skills; Solid Infrastructure; Service Infrastructure; Digital Services Development & Promotion; Soft Infrastructure; Digital Society & Emerging Technologies; and Indigenous Content Development & Adoption.

Since assuming office, the current Director General of NITDA, Mr Kashifu Inuwa Abdullahi has sought to consolidate on past achievements and set new directions to reflect the dynamics of the industry as it evolves in the direction of the fourth industrial revolution (4IR).

Inuwa Abdullahi is leading the new regulatory direction in conformity with the NDEPS that seeks to harness the benefits of emerging technologies such as Blockchain, Internet of Things ((IoT), Robotics, and Big Data among others. There is an increasing focus on sub-sectors such as agritech, eHealth and the likes.

⏸

Inuwa Abdullahi is leading the new regulatory direction in conformity with the NDEPS that seeks to harness the benefits of emerging technologies

⏸

For instance, the Minister of Communications and Digital Economy Dr Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami

disclosed that the agency has recorded tremendous achievements by creating 2,686 new jobs, according to the statistics showing in the agency's first Annual Nigeria Data Protection Regulation (NDPR) Performance Report 2019-2020.

The Report unveiled by the minister has showed that NDPR met the need of the Nigerian environment; indicating that 76 per cent of Data Protection Compliance Organisations (DPCOs) has helped the country in their compliance with the regulation.

Dr Pantami expressed his satisfaction on how NITDA provided requisite support for industry adoption of the NDPR, adding that,"I have reviewed the report and

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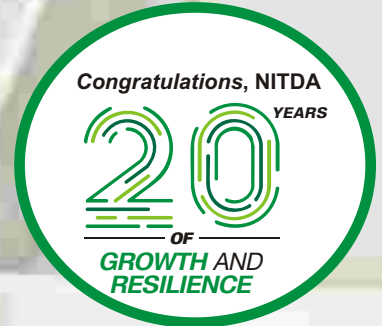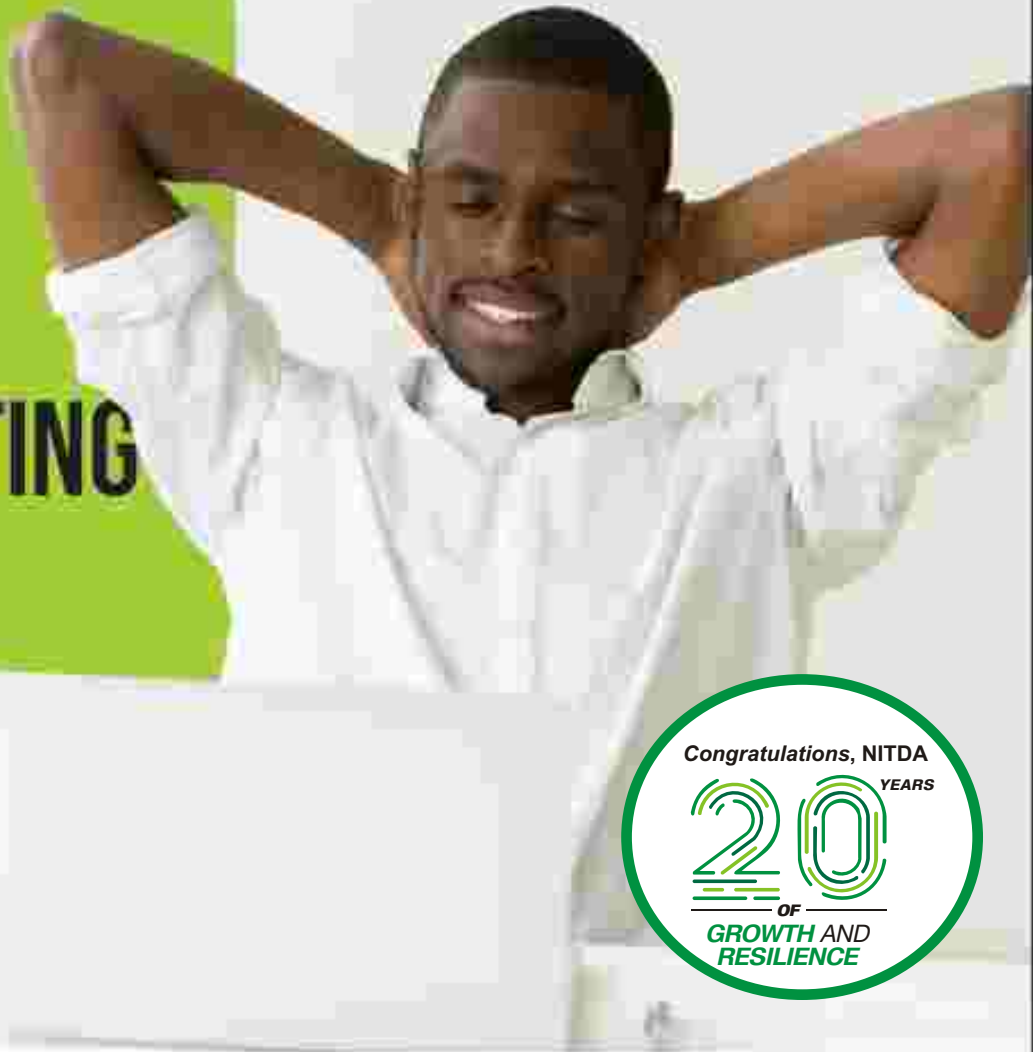
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A Chronological account of NITDA: 2001 - 2021

By Abdul-Hakeem Ajijola

When IT Edge News sought to begin work on this Special May Edition in celebration of Two Decades of NITDA, it sought for the imprimatur of the experts who have seen through the evolution of NITDA as an IT regulatory and development agency. There were few left in the field not overtaken by age or the exigencies of business. It was around 2am that IT Edge News and Abdul-Hakeem Ajijola (fondly known in the industry as AHA) opened conversation via the Signal app. Who else but AHA? Like NITDA, AHA has evolved as an institution, one force of expertise with a bounty of knowledge on an industry perpetually in transition. In the early years of NITDA, the first decade, I have had the privilege of sitting with him on some committees notably the NITDA's ICT4D Committee Chaired by Prof Clement Dzidonu (founder of the Accra Institute of Technology AIT) under the auspices of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). AHA provided insights on what will become significantly part of Nigeria's Cybersecurity roadmap. I had led the sub-committee on ICT Popularisation and Awareness. That 2am, very typical of AHA, he agreed to make available strategic content for this special edition on the chronological evolution of NITDA and its strategic importance over those two decades. Even more importantly, he was already inking the Anniversary Lecture Presentation of 20 Years of NITDA for the agency as part of its commemorative activities. Much of that presentation is embodied here. At 20, NITDA has become the most significant institutional tool with which the Nigerian government pushes its agenda for national ICT development, and as it is today, the digital destiny of Nigeria is anchored on NITDA's capacity to deliver on its mandate.

NITDA @ 20:
LOOKING BACK TO MOVING FORWARD TO

"Growth and Resilience."

> **The most profound single impact of 2001 IT Policy and NITDA has been the Rise and Well-being of the Digital Nigerian... The Well-being of the Digital Nigerian is, in my opinion why NITDA was created, continues to exist and the basis of its value proposition. No other Agency was created with such a profound future looking mandate. To the Management, Staff, and all in the NITDA ecosystem the future of Nigeria is literally in your hands.**
>
> -Abdul-Hakeem Ajijola

Policy development

1. In mid-1999, President Olusegun Obasanjo declared IT a national priority in response to the National Information and Communication Infrastructure (NICI) process across Africa.
2. In May 1999, the Information Technology [Industries] Association (ITAN) guided by Mr. Chris Uwaje, commenced the development of a proposed draft IT Policy, and submitted same, in August 1999, to His Royal Majesty (HRM) Chief Ebitimi Banigo, Minister, Federal Ministry of Science and Technology. In November 1999 ITAN hosted a conference on IT Policy, in Abuja.
3. In December 1999, Alhaji Ladi Ogunneye, President of the Computer Association of Nigeria (**COAN**), precursor to the Nigeria Computer Society (**NCS**), constituted a committee chaired by Mr. Tunde Ezichi (Njoku). Members included Bishop Professor A.D. Akinde, Dr. Chris Nwannenna, Professor G.M.M. Obi; Late Dr. Mfon Amana; Demola Aladekomo; Kola Ogunlana, Professor Olayide Abass, OFR, who was the secretary. They held retreats in Ibadan in January 2000, and Lekki in early February 2000. The

process produced a proposed draft IT Policy document, and their final report was submitted, in February 2000, to HRM Ebitimi Banigo the Minister, Federal Ministry of Science and Technology.

4. Key stakeholders who made contributions included Will Anyaegbunam; Chief O Ayodele; Professor Olu Longe; Dr. I. A. Odeyemi; Professor Nike Osofisan; and Deacon Ojinta Oji-Alala. Other contributors to the IT policy development process included Dr. Jimson Olufuye; Dr. Bim Salako; Ibrahim Tizhe; Pius Okigbo jr.; Late Engr. Chijioke Simeon Agu; Sam Juwe; Jim Ovia; Professor Pat Utomi; Chief Don Etiebet; Late Chief Tunji Odegbami and late Dr. Hafiz Wali. Professionals and organisations like Institute of Software Practitioners of Nigeria (ISPN) also submitted reports and proposed draft versions of the IT Policy document. Shortly thereafter a master plan   for the development of a national ICT program "ICT 2000" was produced.

5. By the end of 2000, the submissions were in the charge of Professor Turner Isoun, Minister, and Mrs. Pauline Tallen Minister of State, Federal Ministry of Science and Technology. All the submissions were carefully reviewed at a final drafting retreat in early January 2001 held at the offices of the Cooperative Information Network (COPINE), Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, with late Professor G.O. Ajayi as Chairman. Committee members included Professor S.A. Sanni, Chris Uwaje, Alexej von Radloff and Abdul-Hakeem Ajijola. The output was the 2001 IT Policy draft that was approved by the Federal Executive Council (FEC) in March 2001. I vividly recollect that:

   a. I had to leave early on the last day due to the birth of my younger daughter who is now in University and whom the late Professor Ajayi called IT baby.

   b. During the deliberations of how NITDA was to be funded, late Professor Ajayi passionately believed that because President Obasanjo had declared IT a national priority then NITDA would be well funded. History showed that at the beginning this was not the case and NITDU/ NITDA struggled to survive without meaningful budget and great sacrifice by the first set of staff.

> **Lesson:** An important takeaway for those who maybe fortunate to be involved in developing future policies, strategies, or roadmaps, NEVER assume money will be available, even for national priorities. Always ensure that well thought through funding mechanisms are in place or clearly articulated.

These policy related interventions did not happen in isolation and there are many unsung heroes and heroines who made the 2001 IT Policy and NITDA possible. As a nation **we must find an appropriate way to thank them**.

Establishment
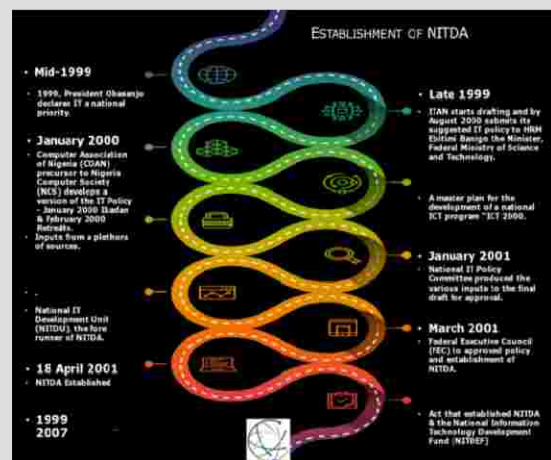
1. NITDA and its fore runner National IT Development Unit (NITDU), is the institutional mechanism to implement the National Information Technology (IT) Policy 2001 and subsequent revisions. NITDU, started its office by squatting with the National Biotechnology Development Agency (NABDA), which is an agency under the Federal Ministry of Science and Technology.

> **Lesson:** If you are at the start of your professional life and squatting, appreciate that we must all start somewhere, even NITDA had to.

2. The Federal Executive Council (FEC) approved the   IT Policy and establishment of NITDA in March 2001 and NITDA was then established on the 18 April 2001.

3. Subsequently, a NITDA Act Implementation Committee was constituted whose members included Professor Gabriel M. M. Obi, as Chairman, Dr. Moses O. Ubaru, Maxwell Kadiri esq (Barrister), Basil Udotai esq (Barrister), and Emmanuel Edet esq (Barrister).

4. Senator Professor Iya Abubakar sponsored National Information Technology Development Agency bill on behalf of the IT community. Senate Hearing on NITDA Bill took place in December 2005 while the hearing on Computer Professional Registration Council (CPN)/ National Computer Society (NCS) IT Bill held in March 2006.

5. National Information Technology Development Agency Act, 2007 also established the National Information Technology Development Fund (NITDEF), managed by NITDA, that is financed by contributions from the private sector. This fund has in large measure ensured the **growth and resilience** of NITDA.

Vision and Mission

1. The Vision of the 2001 IT Policy was to make Nigeria an IT-capable country and a key player in the Information Society, using IT as the engine for sustainable development and global competitiveness.

Currently, NITDA's Vision is "To proactively facilitate the development of Nigeria into a sustainable digital economy".

2. The Mission of the 2001 IT Policy is to "Use IT" for Education, Creation of Wealth, Poverty Eradication, Job Creation and Global Competitiveness.

NITDA's current Mission is "As an apex IT Agency, we create an enabling environment where Nigerians develop, adopt, and derive value from digital technology."

> **Lesson:** Though the 2001 IT Policy and NITDA Vision and Mission statements align, the Vision and Mission of NITDA seems to be narrower than that of the IT Policy, which raises question of who will fill the gaps?

Policy Review

Efforts to review and refresh the 2001 National IT Policy which was envisaged to "expire" in 2005, and the development of related policy initiatives resulted in documents that were developed. However, these draft documents were subsequently NOT approved by FEC possibly due to contentious issues, concepts, and existing mandates. They include:

1. 2008, a committee was inaugurated to review and refresh the 2001 National IT Policy. Its membership consisted of Professor Adenike O. Osofisan; Engr. Sam Adeleke; Nurudeen Aderinto; A. N. Ahmed; Abdul-Hakeem Ajijola; Dr. Uwem Asomugha; Sola Fanawopo; Bashir A. Idris; late Ndukwe Kalu; Inye Kemabonta; Dr. Henry Nkemadu; Professor Gabriel M.M. Obi; Dr. Jimson Olufuye; Afolabi Salisu; Kayode Shobajo; late Simion Agwu; Frank Ugbodaga; Chris Uwaje; and Yinusa Zakari Ya'u. NITDA, through Professor Cleopas Officer Angaye, and Galaxy Backbone, through Gerald Ilukwe, provided logistics support. The committee received significant external intellectual contributions from Abubakar Kari; Christian C. Ekeigwe; Dele Olawore; Femi Oyesanya; Gbenga Sesan; Igrebo Eze; Dr. (Mrs.) Jummai Umar-Ajijola; Musa-Ali Baba; Nicol Woodard; Ms. Nnenna Nwakanma; Ms. Roslyn Docktor; Segun Olugbile; Tomi Davies; and Ms. Hadiza Zubairu-Gamawa. The draft did not get traction and seemingly disappeared.

2. 2011, Mrs. Omobola Johnson, Minister of Communications Technology, set up an ad hoc committee to harmonise all the various ICT related policies such as Telecommunications, Broadcasting, Information Technology and Postal Services. Members includes Professor Raymond Akwule as Chair; Engineer (Mrs.) Ngozi Ogujiofor; Alheri Saidu; Mrs. Yetunde Akinloye; Dr. Vincent Olatunji; Abdul-Karim Baba; Ayoola Oke; Dr. (Ms.) Abiodun Jagun and Ola Ogunneye. A draft was produced but it seems the process stalled and has not yet recovered.

3. 2016, Abdur-Raheem Adebayo Shittu (Barrister),

Minister of Communications initiated the drafting of Nigeria ICT Strategic Roadmap 2016-2019 hosted by Planning, Research and Statistics Department of the Federal Ministry of Communications with members including Hajiya (Mrs.) Nima Salman Mann (Barrister); Abdul-Hakeem Ajijola; David Ibhawoh; Kazeem Kolawole Raji; Najim Animashaun; Shuaib Afolabi Salisu; Dr. John C. Eweama; and Mrs. Bose Olaniyi; with records taken by Babatunde Onadipe. The committee was supported by inputs of representatives of Agencies under the Ministry.

4. 2016, Abdur-Raheem Adebayo Shittu (Barrister) Minister of Communications initiated the drafting of the Information and Communications Technology Sector Strategic Plan (ICTSSP) 2016-2020.

It will be helpful to document and fully understand why these policy documents were not approved so that the nation can learn, improve, and move forward. Documentation may exist, that the author is not privy to, that explains the reasons for their rejection. Despite this, the nation should be grateful to those that made significant efforts to move our IT Policy forward.

> **Lesson:** We may have passed the IT and ICT policy stage and should now look at developing Digital Policies and Strategies for an Information Society that depends on Digital Economy but is much broader than the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS). This is because we must build an Information Society which encompasses in the digital realm Citizenship, Government, Safety, Security, Warfare and Democracy; Work, Organisations, Responsible Data usage, and Rights to Privacy; Health and Well-being; Teaching, Learning, Research, Innovation and Education; Economy, Culture, Mobility, Smart Cities, Intelligent Communities and Efficient Energy; and so on

2001 2004: Late Professor Gabriel Olalere Ajayi Director-General (DG), Father of getting NITDA established
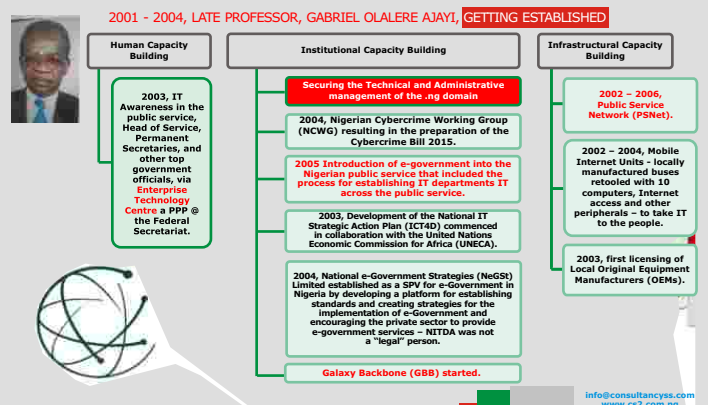
NITDA's start was humble but there was commitment to make it work by leveraging the following implementation strategy:

1   Human Capacity Building

a. 2003, raising IT Awareness in the public service by training the Head of Service, Permanent Secretaries, and other top government officials, via Enterprise Technology Centre a PPP at the Federal Secretariat.

i. From the beginning NITDA understood the imperatives of outsourcing, public private partnerships and multistakeholder decision making ecosystems in a nation that was emerging from prolonged military dictatorships where technology was often feared and considered to be a national security risk.

ii. This was also impacted by the enlightenment of the political leadership by the 1919 African NICI and 2003 United Nations World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) processes.

2   Institutional Capacity Building:

a. Securing, on behalf of the Federal Government of Nigeria, the Technical and Administrative management of the Nigeria Top-Level Domain (TLD) name, ".ng", that was being managed by Mr. Randy Bush- an American volunteer as the Technical Point of Contact and Mrs Ibukun Odusote as Administrative Point of Contact. It was important to fully domesticate and institutionalise its ownership.

b. 2005, the introduction of e-government into the Nigerian public service that included the process for establishing IT departments and units across the public service.

c. 2003, the development of the National IT Strategic Action Plan (ICT4D) commenced in collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and guided by Professor Clement Dzidonu from Ghana.

d. 2004, the National e-Government Strategies (NeGSt) Limited established as a SPV, chaired by the DG NITDA, to drive e-Government in Nigeria by developing a platform for establishing standards and creating strategies for the implementation of e-Government and encouraging the private sector to provide e-government services. The partnership collapsed in part because NITDA was not a "legal" person at that time. Apparently, NeGSt still exists as a company managing the Nigerian Immigration Passport Issuance Services System and is said to

be currently working on the e-Visa scheme.

3   Infrastructural Capacity Building.

a. 2002   2006, development and deployment of Public Service Network (PSNet).

b. 2003, the establishment of the first set of Rural Internet Resource Centres (RIRCs).

c. 2002-2004, Mobile Internet Units which were locally manufactured buses retooled with 10 c computers, Internet access and other peripherals intended to take IT to the people.

d. 2003, the first licensing of Local Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs).

> **LESSON:** Late Professor. Gabriel Olalere Ajayi, the pioneer DG of NITDA died in December 2004.

2005   2013: Professor Cleopas Officer Angaye. Father of NITDA formalisation
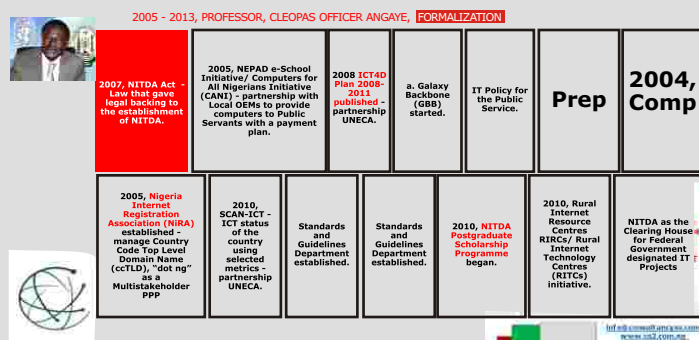
1.   NITDA Act of 2007, the cumulation of the process of enactment of the law that gave legal backing to the establishment of NITDA as we know it today was concluded.

> **LESSON:** NITDA survived grew from 2001 to 2007 without any enabling legislation or meaningful budget.

2.   Galaxy Backbone (GBB) Limited started, and NITDA was instrumental plus anchored the conversion of the shell of a Jigawa State "Galaxy" initiative into a company owned by the Federal Government in line with the 2001 IT Policy Chapter 2 on Infrastructure that mandated NITDA to "establish and develop a National Information Infrastructure (NII) 'backbone'."

3. 2005, the NEPAD e-School Initiative and the Computers for All Nigerians Initiative (CANI). CANI partnered with local OEMs to provide computers to Public Servants with an affordable monthly repayment plan.
4. Drafted an IT Policy for the Public Service.
5. 2004, NITDA contributed to the Nigerian Cybercrime Working Group (NCWG) resulting in the preparation of the Cybercrime Bill 2015.
6. 2004, established Computer Emergency Readiness and Response Team (CERRT) unit.
7. 2005, finalised the establishment of the Nigeria Internet Registration Association (NiRA) as the institutional mechanism to manage ".ngTLD" as a PPP while practicing Multistakeholder principles.
8. Rural Internet Technology Centres (RITCs) were deployed across the country.
9. 2009, Completed and published the ICT for Development (ICT4D) Plan in partnership with UNECA and approved by the FEC.
10. 2010, SCAN-ICT also developed in partnership with UNECA was a project to give a "snapshot" of the ICT status of the country using selected metrics.
11. The Standards and Guidelines Department was established in this period and the process of drafting Guidelines and Policies began.
12. 2010, NITDA Postgraduate Scholarship Programme began.
13. NITDA as the Clearing House for Federal Government IT Projects commenced.

2014 to 2016: Mr. Peter Olu Jack. Father of Partnerships

2014 to 2016, Mr. Peter Olu Jack. Partnerships

1. Established the Office for ICT Innovation and Entrepreneurship (OIIE), a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) to promote innovative indigenous ICT-based solutions.
2. Established the Office for Nigerian Content Development in ICT (ONC) another SPV that focuses on fostering local content in the ICT sector including preparing a set of Guidelines for Local Content adoption.
3. Public Access Venues and Rural Information Technology Centres (RITCs) were established in Nigerian Communities to bridge the digital divide.
4. 2015, deployed Knowledge Access Venues (KAVs)/Virtual Libraries in Tertiary Institutions to provide information resources to students, lecturers, and researchers.
5. Information Technology Development Entrepreneurship Accelerator (IDEA) Centres were established to incubate local start-ups.
6. ICT Policy for States as a collaborative endeavour to encourage stated to adopt ICT as an engine of growth.
7. Commenced full participation in the annual Gulf Information Technology Exhibition (GITEX) and globally showcased promising Nigerian start-ups.
8. Several Standards and Guidelines were developed, including Local content guidelines and policy in Nigeria; Framework for standards, guidelines, and policies on IT; Establishment of consumer complaint platform with dedicated website and lines where the public may report bad or substandard IT services or products; Guidelines on IT uses in schools; Standards for IT network security; **e-Government interoperability framework**; Guidelines for e-waste management; Compliance framework and implementation guidelines for Nigerian content development; Standards on IT infrastructures in built environment; Standards of IT infrastructures in public utilities; Standards on Computer Assembled Products; Implementation guidelines on IT uses in schools; Development of hologram and machine-readable barcode for IT products certification; **Framework for NITDA IT Partner Ecosystem**; Development of website security and certification program for Nigeria websites; Standards and guidelines for transactional web portal; and **Framework Women & Youth**.

2016-2019: Dr. Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami. Father of Regulation

8. E-Government Digital Services and Regulations department created.

9. Cybersecurity department created.

10. ICT training for Persons Living With Disabilities in which participants were given laptops.

11. January 2019, **Published the Nigeria Data Protection Regulation (NDPR)** which is a significant regulation for the IT ecosystem.

1. Fully activated Regulatory aspects of the Agency.

Lesson: These capabilities were incorporated in the NITDA act 2007 but not fully activated by previous administrations. Courage is needed to move forward.

2. Published a Roadmap for Developing the ICT Sector consisting of **Regulation; Capacity Building; Local Content Development; Job Creation; Government Digital Services; Cybersecurity; and Digital Inclusion**.

3. 2017, Strengthened NITDA's capacity to clear Government ICT Projects including a Standing Committee that reviews all the ICT Projects to ensure value for money, reduce duplication, and ensure sustainability and adherence to local content guidelines and regulations subsequently **saving the Federal Government over N22.5 billion**.

4. Embarked on Capacity building programmes like Digital Literacy, Networking, Internet of Things, Cybersecurity, Software Testing and Big Data Analytics.

5. The **National Digital Literacy Council established**.

6. NITDA obtained **ISO 27001 certification**. The International Organization for Standardization/ International Electrotechnical Commission (ISO/ IEC) 27001 is an international management standard on information security.

7. OIIE commenced Start-up Friday events for the first-time outside Abuja and Lagos. The event has now been held in the North-Central, South-West, North-West, North-East and South-South Zones of Nigeria.

7. A strengthened ONC now engages with local OEMs, software practitioners and the public sector organizations.

8. Enforce and monitor the Executive Orders 3 and 5 which relate to the issue of Local Content Promotion.

2020 Date: Mr. Kashifu Inuwa Abdullahi. A new Generation

1. Supplementary regulation in to strengthen NDPR.

2. Innovative implementation of **NDPR lead directly to seventy (72) Data Protection Compliance Organisations (DPCOs) being licenced; 2,700 jobs created; and a N2.5 billion data security industry being established**. Examples of roles and activities which have now been created include:

a. **Data Protection Compliance Organisations (DPCOs)** carry out to data protection audits and file a report with NITDA. They also monitor, audit, conduct training and provided data protection compliance consulting to all Data Controllers in Nigeria. Not only has this nascent industry been growing it is also furthering the implementation and survival of the regulation by evolving NDPR in into legislation.

b. **Data Protection Officers (DPO's)** are responsible for overseeing a company's data protection strategy and its implementation to ensure compliance with NDPR requirements.

c. The **data controller** determines the purposes for which and how personal data is processed.

d. **Data processor** processes any data that the data controller gives them.

> **Lesson:** This is an implementation model that cost effectively replicates the regulator is one that other regulators should look closely at and emulate where reasonable.

1. 80 Digital Capacity Training Centres.

2. National Adopted School for Smart Education (NASSE) commenced.

3. NITDA Roadmap 2021 to 2024.

4. **National Adopted School initiative**.

5. **National Adopted Village for Smart Agriculture (NAVSA)** initiative. So far 145 farmers have learnt to utilize technology to improve farm yields.

6. **Future-Hack**, innovation contest - participants receive funding and mentorship to develop marketable products and services.

7. Capacity building programmes including but not limited to NITDA Academy; Over 650 artisans; ICT for 200 women; IT Innovation and Incubation Parks; Community IT Training Centres; Virtual Start-up Clinic - young people to meet with mentors; Massive Online Open Courses initiative for Nigeria's tertiary institutions; and Local Content Promotion - Chiniki Guard won 10,000 USD @GITEX 2019.

8. Development and implementation of the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS) This was a multi-Agency collaborative endeavour with the following pillars: **Developmental Regulation; Digital Literacy & Skills; Solid Infrastructure; Service Infrastructure; Digital Services Development & Promotion; Soft Infrastructure; Digital Society & Emerging Technologies; and Indigenous Content Development & Adoption.**

NITDA's Acting Directors General

Dr. Moses Ubaru

Late Dr. Ashiru Sani Daura

Dr. Vincent Olatunji

Acting Director's General

Ensured Continuity of NITDA's Growth and Resilience

Special Thank You for your often unrecognized Service

People whose roles have been central to ensuring the continuity of NITDA's Growth and Resilience because they acted as NITDA's Director General when called upon include **Dr. Moses Ubaru**; late **Dr. Ashiru Sani Daura**, an incredibly honest and good man, whose death on Friday 23 April 2021 is a profound loss to this nation - May the Almighty rest is soul and grant Paradise as his final abode; and our indefatigable **Dr. Vincent Olatunji**. On behalf of a grateful nation and technology community I say **Thank You for your often unrecognized Service**, may the Almighty reward you all abundantly.

NITDA as a Family

CROSS-SECTION OF THE NITDA FAMILY

First 10 Staff:
* Gabriel Olalere Ajayi; Dr Moses O. Ubaru; Mr J.O. Abu; Umar E. Ibrahim; Pere S. Isari; Alex von Radlof; Ms Dolapo Fasiku; David Ajayi; Teldir Bature; and Scholastica Katangu.
The first set of Youth Corps members:
* Ben Eze; Joseph Okegwaele; late Arnold; and Tunji Obakeye.
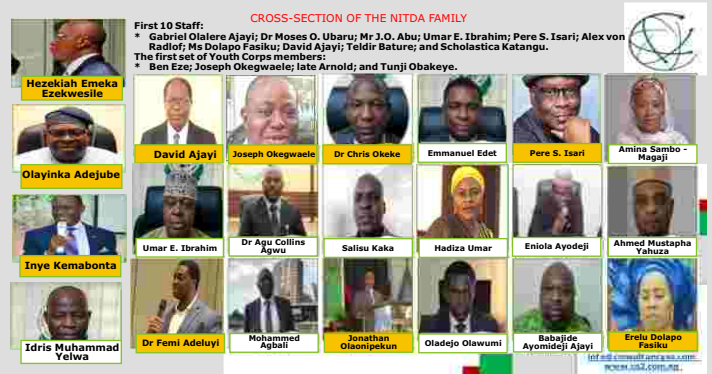
NITDA is a family, and even the best of families passes through challenging times and good phases. However, please appreciate than **NITDA exists to move Nigeria and by extension Africa into the digital realm**. The scope of what remains to be done is bigger that what any of us can achieve alone. Together, we can move our society toward **making Nigeria an IT-capable country and a key player in the Information Society, using IT as the engine for sustainable development and global competitiveness**.

In addition to the family members who contributed to the various policies and legislation, the first 10 Staff of NITDA of the NITDA family include Professor Gabriel Olalere Ajayi; Dr. Moses O. Ubaru; J.O. Abu; **Umar E. Ibrahim** (the only remaining first team member); Pere S. Isari; Alex von Radlof; Ms. Dolapo Fasiku; David Ajayi; Teldir Bature; and Ms. Scholastica Katangu. While the first set of Youth Corps members assigned to NITDA included Ben Eze; Joseph Okegwaele; late Arnold; and Tunji Obakeye.

Permit me to mention the following NITDA Family members, out of respect and admiration, Senior Emeka Hezekiah Ezekwesili, whom I have him known since 1974 (47 years) as my "Pro-Unitate" senior who gave me a gentle introduction to life in boarding school; Olayinka Adejube, whose kindness and generosity knows no bounds; Barrister Inye Kemabonta, a respectable man of intellect and panache; Dr. Idris

Muhammad Yelwa, a brother in the true sense of the word; and Barrister Emmanuel Edet, a person who respects truth.

> **Lesson:** I apologize if I did not mention "you" because the family is large, please know you are included.

> **Lesson:** NITDA is urged to work with the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) to compile and publish details of these important statistics because if you do not take charge of your narrative the wrong narrative maybe propagated.

Challenges

Impact

NITDA has made significant impact in the areas of:

1. Increased ICT awareness, especially in the public sector. This is responsible for the improved deployment of ICT in the public sector and the establishment of an IT cadre and associated Departments/ Units across the Federal Public Service.

2. Job and wealth creation has increased as observe by the rise of a generation of solutions developers, providers and ICT based start-ups nationwide.

3. In tandem with its sister organisations under the aegis of the Federal Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy (FMoCDE), NITDA has supported the significant levels of Internet penetration and utilisation in Nigeria.

4. Youth Empowerment through various human capacity building, institutional, and infrastructural interventions nationwide.

5. Improved contribution of IT to the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

6. The NITDA Clearing House has, as earlier observed, saved the Federal Government over N22.5billion thus far.

However, there remains challenges and contentious issues like:

1. The concepts of Information Technology (IT) and Information Communications Technologies (ICT). IT is defined as "The art and applied sciences that deal with data and information. Examples are capture, representation, processing, security, **transfer, interchange**, presentation, management, organization, storage, and retrieval of data and information." However, Nigeria effectively runs IT and Communications (C) as separate policy, regulatory and sectoral development tracks. Arguably, modern communications systems are "software" driven, and **in this era of technology convergence, there is no "IT" without "C" nor "C" without "IT."**

2. The exact jurisdictional boundaries of **NITDA** (**advancing the use of IT**), and agency of the FMoCDE and the **Computer Professionals Registration Council** (**CPN**) **of Nigeria** (**advancing the knowledge of IT i.e., the profession** like the old City and Guilds certifications and qualifications) under the auspices of the Federal Ministry of Education. Such apparent overlaps and duplications need to be comprehensively harmonised and completely resolved.

3. The management of our spectrum resources remains spread across FMoCDE and Federal Ministry of Information and Culture and their designated regulatory Agencies which may not be the most efficient management model and needs to be reviewed. This is relevant to NITDA as multimedia

convergence increases and efficient and optimal utilisation of communications spectrum impacts the deployment of Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), and Quantum Computing amongst other ongoing developments.

4. Funding, despite the establishment of NITDEF, the magnitude, scale, and scope of the task before NITDA is daunting and thus our society needs to appreciate that enhanced investments in indigenous cyber skills talent, related technologies and requisite research, development and innovation is the only guarantor of improved human wellbeing and enhanced global status for the nation and its people. To avoid a technological future dictated by outside and possibly hostile nations, it is imperative that Nigeria invests in developing a full spectrum of indigenous talent pool, sovereign technologies, and collaborate with local, regional, and international partners to establish standards, and foster market conditions that ensure innovation and diversity of supply while building robust IT related capacities including cyber defences.

5. Recruitment and retention of requisite professionals remains difficult for NITDA as the pay and related incentive structures of the public service environment are not competitive. NITDA should where feasible spin-off and delegate its functions and responsibilities to PPP, SPV's and evolve new economic sectors that can be more efficiently and competitively operated beyond the vagaries of government budget availability, with NITDA retaining partial ownership on a case-by-case basis. Examples of this include NiRA, OIIE, ONC and NDPR implementation. NITDA should be seen, as a champion, "regulator", and practitioner of Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) and not try to do everything itself.

6. **Flaws in "Nigeria's" policy development process:** Beyond the IT Policy, we erroneously believe that Nigeria develops great policies and plans but that our weakness is only in the implementation. A policy is inherently a statement of intent, while a strategy is the plan for achieving the policy intentions with deliverables, responsibilities, rational outcomes, Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) and other performance metrics. My experience is that many seemingly professionally written policies, strategies, and plans are severely flawed. For

a. The intended outcome of a policy and strategy is that it is **implemented in the best interest of stakeholders** and the nation. For this to happen:

i. Stakeholders must feel **involved** in the development process.

ii. The document must be **understood**. To be understood it must be **read**. To be read it must be **short, direct, and easy to read**. If you subject many Policy documents to the Flesch Reading Ease Formula, and Flesch-Kincaid Grade level Grade Conversion, freely available in Microsoft Word, you will be horrified at the results.

iii. Too many policies are written in convoluted arcane formats, incredibly dull and bland. Such documents must be **simple**, as often political, and strategic policy makers do not understand the nuances and technicalities of the subject matter and many technocrats lack the necessary know-how to address these challenges, nor do they have the power to do so even if they knew what to do.

iv. Policy documents are often **wrongly targeted**. The drafters often target senior policy makers who have attended prestigious policy development institutions and not the middle level public servants, who may not yet have attended such courses, that must take extracts from the policy document as use them to design implementable projects that actualise the policy.

v. Policies are often developed in plush city offices by people who **do not understand, have insight or empathy for the stakeholders** in the "trenches" who need the positive impact of the policy.

b. Many policy documents that we generate, like the 2001 IT Policy are:

i. Clear on what they set out to achieve (objectives).

ii. Weak on "why" such imperatives are necessary. This includes the belief system and national philosophy and ethos, which arguably our society has not agreed upon.

iii. The strategic implementation component is often very weak with insufficient clarity on what exactly the deliverables are, who has

primary and secondary responsibility for the deliverables; describing of the expected rational outcomes; detailing the Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) and other performance metrics. That said planning in Nigeria is difficult but plan we must, regardless of the uncertainties and lack of credible and detailed statistics.

iv. Such details are usually not easy decisions to make and are fraught with intricacies and sometimes intrigue given they are often encased in "political" ramifications that the drafters, especially public servants prefer to avoid because it might negatively impact their career progression.

C. We must appreciate that much of Nigeria's IT challenge is NOT just the **last mile connectivity but, in the last 6 inches** i.e., from screen to eyes/ brain especially the human and software interfaces which is under NITDA's purview.

D. Drafters of our policy documents are usually placed under unnecessary time pressure. Policy development process are often rushed at the last moment despite the initiative getting stalled for many months, for no apparent reason, within the public service bureaucracy. More thoughtfulness and empathy from the political masters is warranted because policies and strategies have significant implications on the direction and success of the nation and the wellbeing of its people to whom we own a duty of care and full responsibility.

Lesson: The nation may wish to engage in national conversations about reviewing our policy models with a view to eventually taking a wholistic Information Society and Digital Multimedia approach to our policy, regulatory, resource management and related sectoral development process. As we have seen in nations like Malaysia, a sound Multimedia (ICT) super regulator effectively compliments a good ICT super Developmental Agency and Cybersecurity Agency to cost effectively drive the development of a trusted, broad-based, and prosperous Information Society.

7. Ultimately, the level of awareness of political leaders toward technology in general and NITDA needs to be improved. NITDA needs to work with its sister organisations and stakeholders to raise the awareness of the political class and demonstrate that investing in people and technology is good politics, because a happy electorate will support the political establishment.

Way Forward

WAY FORWARD CONTINUED GROWTH AND RESILIENCE
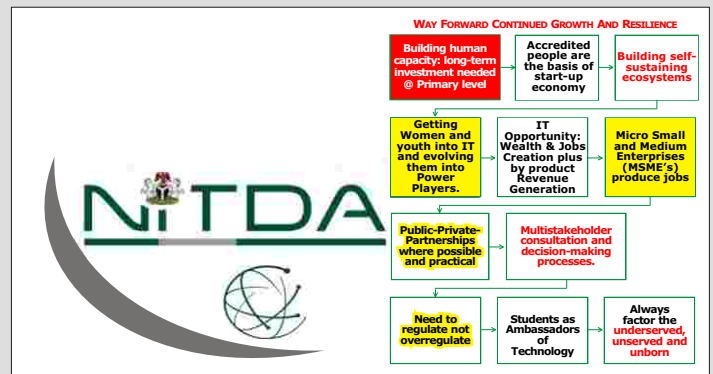
NITDA's continued Growth and Resilience is vital to Nigeria's digital survivability. NITDA has had its share of successes and difficulties, great highs, and a few abysmal lows. However, **consistency, principled flexibility with efficiency is essential to the sectors growth and resilience/ survivability and relevance**.

NITDA operates at the heart of a fast-moving sector and it must endeavour to **keep replicating itself**, optimise and leverage on the private sector through Special Purpose Vehicles (SPV's), Public-Private-Partnerships (PPP's) and evolving new sub-sector while cutting down its staff size and overheads i.e., costs to survive and have the desired impact.

The imperatives of "Using IT" for Education, Creation of Wealth, Poverty Eradication, Job Creation and Global Competitiveness can only be achieved **if NITDA's management earns the trust of colleagues, industry, and society**, and it is important that colleagues, industry, and society believe and have faith in NITDA's management.

There is no area of Information Technology (IT) that is not important. However, NITDA should consider focusing (re-focusing) on:

1. **Building human capacity - long-term investment is needed at the Primary level and** leveraging students as Ambassadors of Technology.

2. **We must continually build self-sustaining ecosystems** with the awareness that accredited

people are the basis of start-up economy while Leveraging Public-Private-Partnerships where possible and practical. And further appreciating that Multi-stakeholder consultation and decision-making processes work in the best long-term interest of all.

3. **IT presents a societal Opportunity to generate Wealth, create Jobs and as a by-product Generate Revenue in the form of taxes for government** with the understanding that Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME's) produce more jobs than any other segment, and thus we must first focus on empowering and multiplying MSME's.

4. **It is imperative that we get our Women and youth into IT and evolve them into Power Players**. No Society/ Economy can make significant headway if it does not leverage 50% of its population (Women) and stifles another 47% (Male Youth) of its population. IT permits women to work from home in culturally conservative environments or situations when going out to work is not convenient such as pandemics, while raising a young family or during challenging social, security and economic situations.

5. **We need to firmly and fairly regulate but we must be careful not to over-regulate.**

Lesson: In our policies, plans and decision-making processes, we must always factor the underserved, unserved and unborn, because they are not here to make inputs, yet they must live with the consequences of our decisions.

NITDA's most profound single impact

MOST PROFOUND IMPACT OF 2001 IT POLICY AND NITDA: THE RISE OF THE DIGITAL NIGERIAN.

NITDA @ 20, A legacy to be proud of!

The most profound single impact of 2001 IT Policy and NITDA has been the **Rise and Well-being of the Digital Nigerian** which includes the IT ecosystem, and many who read this

document. The **Well-being of the Digital Nigerian is, and the evolution of an Information Society are, in my opinion, the reason why NITDA was created, continues to exist and is the basis of its value proposition**. No other Agency was created with such a profound future looking mandate. To the Management, Staff, and all in the NITDA ecosystem, **the future of Nigeria is literally in your hands**.

However, there is much more to do because this journey towards getting all Nigerians to progressively use the digital realm, and achieving a fully integrated and just Information Society,has only just started. In this rapidly evolving ecosystem, we must strive to build a trusted, vibrant, and self-sustaining digital Nigeria that emerges as a global power player. However, it is clear that:**NITDA @ 20 is a legacy we can all be proud of!**

I wish you all well, protection of the almighty, good health, great family relationships and success for you and those you care about.

Thank you, for your attention.

Author: Abdul-Hakeem Ajijola is CEO, Consultancy Support Services Limited, Abuja; Chair, African Union Cyber Security Expert Group, Addis Ababa; Chair, Working Group on Cyber Incident Management and Critical Information Protection of Global Forum on Cyber Expertise (#theGFCE), The Hague; Commissioner, Global Commission on the Stability of Cyberspace (#GCSC), The Hague; Expert, supporting United Nations Office on Disarmament Affairs (#UNODA) development of an online training course in "Cyberdiplomacy", New York, USA. Hecan be reached at: info@consultancyss.com

An IT regulator finds its teeth

By Olusegun Oruame

The **National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) was created in April 18, 2001**. But by **August 18, 2011,** only a decade later, a **government white paper recommended that it be scraped or at best, converted to a unit** under the then Ministry of Communications (now Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy).

In another decade, by April 2021, NITDA has emerged to become one of the most impactful agencies of the federal government of Nigeria.

In those two decades, set against recurring debates over its existence and relevance, NITDA has gone through significant transformations and leaderships that have imbued it with the required confidence to fulfill its mandate.

Perhaps, its poignant change within contemporary times started in 2016 with **Dr Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami**, its immediate past director general when, as many have deemed it, the agency started on its journey of **Regulatory Assertiveness.**

Founded April 18, 2001, NITDA is bestowed with the sole responsibility to implement the Nigerian IT policy; nurture and regulate general IT development in the country.

The **NITDA Act 2007**mandates the agency to create a framework for the planning, research, development, standardization, application, coordination, monitoring, evaluation and regulation of IT practices, activities and systems in Nigeria.

The statute empowers it to develop, regulate and advise on IT in the country through regulatory standards, guidelines and policies. Equally important, the law defines NITDA as government's clearing house for all IT projects and infrastructural development in the country. With so much powers and responsibilities invested in NITDA, many were shocked by the verdict on the agency that it should be converted to a mere unit under its supervisory ministry by the *Presidential Committee on Restructuring and Rationalisation of Federal Government Parastatals, Commissions and Agencies* chaired by **Mr. Steve Oronsaye,** former Head of the Civil Service of the Federation (HCSF).

President Goodluck Jonathan had set up the presidential committee in August 18, 2011 which recommended a reduction in the number of statutory agencies from 263 to 161; 38 agencies should be abolished; 52 agencies should be merged and 14 (including NITDA) should revert to departments in ministries.

The recommendation is contained in an 800-page report which among other suggestions, asked that NITDA be among the agencies to be scrapped out of the statutory and non-statutory parastatals, commissions and agencies in order to reduce the high cost of governance. Nigeria ranks top among countries in the world where cost of governance is extremely high.
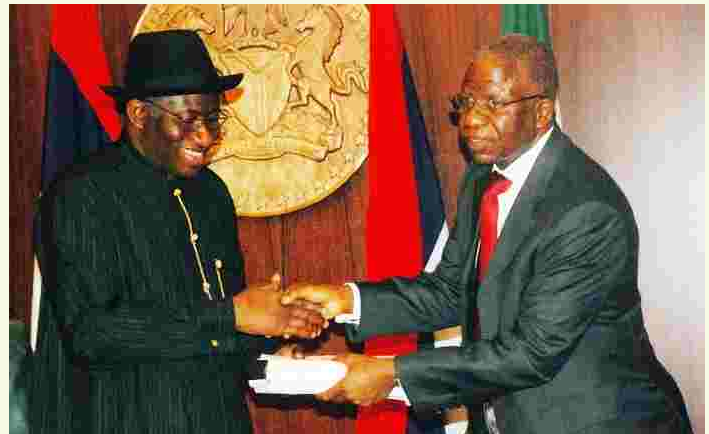
President Goodluck Jonathan receives report of the Presidential Committee on Restructuring and Rationalisation of Federal Government Parastatals, Commissions and Agencies chaired by Mr. Steve Oronsaye which recommends NITDA be converted to a unit under its supervisory ministry.

NITDA and the regulatory enforcement challenge

In the pre-Pantami years which focused on stabilizing NITDA and fostering critical partnerships, NITDA struggled for acceptance from other agencies on which it is statutorily empowered to assert its mandate particularly as it has to do with IT clearance and local content.

Understanding NITDA'smandate

A lot of people know the National information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) as the clearinghouse for government's IT initiatives. But many people are not conversant with NITDA's mandate or even that its mandate empowers it to do much of the activities it executesin accordance with the law.

NITDA's mandates are quite diverse and vast, focusing on the responsibilities of the Agency on fostering the development and growth of IT in Nigeria. In an effort towards ensuring that the IT policy's implementation proceeds with maximum effectiveness. NITDA regulates, monitors, evaluates, and verifies progress on an ongoing basis under the supervision and coordination of the Federal Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy.

The following are NITDA's mandates:

- *To operate and implement the National IT policy and to give effect to provisions of the National Information Technology Development Agency Act (NITDA Act) of 2007;*
- *To ensure that the entire citizenry is empowered with Information Technologies through the development of a critical mass of IT proficient and globally competitive manpower;*
- *To enter into strategic alliance with the private sector as well as international organizations for the actualization of the IT vision;*
- *To develop and regulate the Information Technology Sector in Nigeria;*
- *To ensure that Information Technology resources are readily available to promote efficient national development;*
- *To create IT awareness and ensure universal access in order to promote IT diffusion in all sectors of our national life;*
- *To ensure Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive and Transparent (SMART) governance, using the instrument of Information Technology;*
- *To eliminate waste and ensure that governance and businesses are done in the global standard of using IT for easier, faster and cheaper delivery of services for the transformation of the Nigerian economy from a natural resource-based economy to that of a knowledge-driven one;*

- *To encourage local production and manufacture of IT components in a competitive manner in order to generate foreign earnings and create jobs;*
- *To create the necessary enabling environment and facilitate private sector and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the IT sector in Nigeria;*
- *To improve food production and security;*
- *To render advisory services to the public sector on IT programs and projects;*
- *To propose relevant IT legislation for the development and regulation of the sector;*
- *To serve as a clearing house for all IT procurement and services in the public sector;*
- *To ensure that Information Technology resources are readily available to promote Nigerian development;*
- *To ensure that Nigeria would benefit maximally, and also contribute meaningfully to the global solutions to overcome the challenges of the Information Age;*
- *To empower Nigerians to participate in software and IT system development;*
- *To improve access to public information for all citizens, bringing transparency to government processes;*
- *To establish and develop IT infrastructure and maximize its use nationwide;*
- *To stimulate the private sector to become the driving force for IT creativity and productivity and competitiveness;*
- *To encourage government and private sector joint venture collaboration in IT development;*
- *To enhance the national security and law enforcement;*
- *To develop human capital with emphasis on creating and supporting a knowledge-based economy;*
- *To ensure Internet governance and supervision of the management of the country code top-level domain (cctld.ng) on behalf of all Nigerians*

Prof Angaye tried to enforce local content policy. MDAs spurned NITDA.

Despite NITDA Act of 2007, several circulars and Executive Orders, many federal ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) shunned NITDA's attempts at enforcements.

In 2012, NITDA, under **Professor Cleopas Angaye** as its Director General, tried to enforce the local content policy as government had ruled that non-patronage of approved local original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) by its MDAs will be an offence. The MDAs spurned NITDA and there was no consequence.

However, the Pantami years beginning 2016 brought a change and expectedly, untoward opposition from many MDAs in full resistance of NITDA's determination to assert its statutory powers within the ambit of its mandate.

By law, MDAs are under obligation to seek clearance from NITDA before embarking on any IT project as enshrined in Section 6 of the NITDA Act, 2007, as well as Service-wide Circular from the Office of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation which makes the agency the clearing house for all IT procurement in the public sector.

But MDAs hitherto ignored this law leading to duplicity of IT projects, poorly executed works and in several cases, non-implementation of public

Pantami: Started NITDA on its journey of Regulatory Assertiveness

sector IT projects even when the contracts have been duly awarded and fully paid for.

"It is no longer business as usual. NITDA is not a contract awarding agency," Pantami publicly declared in Lagos at the annual *West Africa Convergence Conference (WACC 2016)* organised by **KMMII Ltd,** publishers of *IT Edge News.* At the event, he affirmed to commit the agency to its core mandate even as he was working on a change blueprint.

At WACC, he had publicly declared that NITDA's new life would be fostered on capacity building, regulation and standardization; and local content. He would aggressively build internal capacity of NITDA's workforce so that the agency could follow through with its mandate to regulate IT and ensure technology standardization.

In the closing days of August 2017, when *IT Edge News* sat with Dr Pantami in his office in Abuja to reflect on his first 12 months in office, NITDA had done 360 degrees under him. *IT Edge News* questions were a checklist on all he had committed to execute a year earlier when he was newly appointed. As it turned out, one of the most profound achievements in those first 12 months in office was setting the tone for IT clearance amongst MDAs and an aggressive pursuit of the national agenda on local content.

Pantami was astutely building a critical synergy with the office of the Auditor General of the Federation (AGF), the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and other key watchdogs in a way that helped to deepen NITDA's ability for enforcements.

The AGF ruled that for any IT project, there would be no contract

NITDA's DG, Kashifu Inuwa Abdullahi: Remained committed to NITDA's regulatory mandate on IT clearance

confirmation for any MDA without NITDA clearance. Without NITDA's procurement clearance, MDAs cannot pass through the AGF and they risk being investigated for corruption by the EFCC. It was a masterstroke that repositioned NITDA and put its role right at heart of any MDA's activity that involved IT.

More than ever before, MDAs were forced to seek NITDA's approval before IT project implementation in a way that helped to foster transparency and accountability in IT procurement process within the public sector.

Compliance level for IT clearance improved from near zero to well over 55% and the response was growing rapidly. The agency saved the federal government up to N3billion in 2017 from unnecessary expenses on foreign ICT procurements by MDAs and stoppage of duplicative procurements among other leakages that were blocked. Much progress had been made by 2021. "In addition to the value of IT project delivery, the IT Clearance has saved over 22.45 billion Naira for the federal government," said Mallam Kashifu Inuwa Abdullahi who took over from Dr Pantami as Director General and Chief Executive Officer in 2019.

"We have helped to stop the mismanagement of huge investment of public funds on IT Projects in ministries, departments and agencies of government," said Pantami to *IT Edge News* in December 2017.

It will be the first time ever that the nation's IT regulator would successfully insist on strict compliance to IT procurement processes. By the end of 2017, the fear of NITDA had become the beginning of wisdom.

As revealed by NITDA's Director General, Abdullahi,the enforcement of the IT clearance process of NITDA as a regulatory instrument started in December 2016. By 2017, NITDA signalled it would be ending the 'free contracts attitude' in the MDAs and would aggressively pursue

compliance to the IT procurement law.

The following year, it issued the *Guidelines for Clearance of Information Technology (IT) Projects by Public Institutions (2018).*The guidelines have served to ensure "a coordinated,standardized and an orderly approach to the deployment of Information Technology (IT) systems by Public Institutions (PIs) ... [that] are required to obtain clearance from the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) for their IT projects."

Unrelenting in its commitment to IT clearance, NITDA has further strengthened the institutional frameworks by which MDAs may adhere to compliance procedures through its portal even as it deepens its monitoring processes and enforcements.

By the end of 2019,NITDA was already initiating enforcement action against 125 MDAs for violation of the IT clearance directives. It's Director General Mallam Abdullahi minced no words as he warned the offending MDAs to comply by submitting all projects for clearance with NITDA and to procure IT goods and services in line with the *Regulatory Guidelines for Nigerian Content Development in ICT* or risk hefty sanctions which include but not limited to prosecution of key officers in such MDAs.

Drive for IT compliance remains strong with Abdullahi

Since his assumption of office, Abdullahi has remained consistent in focusing on NITDA's regulatory mandate in IT procurement. It is one area his predecessor fought an untiring battle to ensure federal MDAs comply with the statutory provisions on IT procurement. In May 2020, the agency reported an assessment and clearance of 62 IT related projects worth N1.16 trillion for January through May. The report was a consolidation of NITDA's persistence at ensuring compliance by MDAs to stave off corruption and save the country money.

In 2019, during eNigeria, President Muhammadu Buhari revealed that the IT clearinghouse has saved the Nigerian government over N16.8 billion through more efficient procurement processes for ICT projects carried out by all MDAs. It was an affirmatory testimonial of good work by Mr. President himself on NITDA that Abdullahi has consolidated on.

A statement issued by the agency in December 2019 and signed by the Director General, Kashifu Inuwa Abdullahi, underscored the seriousness with which NITDA had committed to enforcement of IT clearance. Read excerpts of the statement below.

Comply with IT projects clearance in your own interest - NITDA

"NITDA hereby notifies the general public, MDAs and Government-owned companies that the Agency has initiated enforcement action against one hundred and twenty-five(125) MDAs for violation of the directive of the Federal Government issued via Circular with Ref No. 9736/S.2/C.II/125, issued on 31st August 2018 which mandates all MDAs and Federal Government Agencies to clear all IT Projects with NITDA before implementation and to comply with the Regulatory Framework for Promotion of Local Content in IT in line with Executive Orders 003 & 005.

"To underscore the Government's determination in ensuring compliance to these regulatory instruments, President Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR, in his speech at the 12th edition of the e-Nigeria Conference, Exhibition and Awards, on Thursday 28th November 2019, reiterated his directives given at the 2018 edition of e-Nigeria, that NITDA is to work with relevant stakeholders to ensure that all government-funded ICT projects are reviewed and cleared by the Agency before implementation.

"The Public may recall that NITDA had issued two regulatory instruments for the Promotion of Indigenous Content Development in ICT and the Guidelines for Clearance of Information Technology Projects by Public Institutions. These regulatory instruments were issued pursuant to Section 6 (a) (b) (c) of the NITDA Act 2007, therefore violations of these Guidelines constitute an offence pursuant to Section 17(4) of the Act and punishable under Section 18 of thesame Act.

"NITDA has referred this matter to the Nigerian Police Force for appropriate investigation and prosecution in line with the extant law. Principal and relevant officers of these MDAs will be held liable for violations of these regulations in line Section 17 (3) (a).

"All erring parties are advised in their own interest to comply forthwith by submitting all projects for Clearance with NITDA and to procure IT goods and services in line with the Regulatory Guidelines for Nigerian Content Development in ICT. NITDA remains resolutely committed to enforcing its guidelines and in discharging its mandate for the development of IT in Nigeria

SOME NITDA'S ACHIEVEMENTS

NITDA has executed several policies, regulations and programmes focusing on 7 pillars that are aligned with the 8 pillars of the National Digital Economy Policy & Strategy (NDEPS). They are: *IT Regulation*; *Capacity Building*; *Digital Inclusion*; *Digital Job Creation; Government Digital Service Promotion; Local Content Development; and Cybersecurity. Some* of the achievements under these pillars include and not limited to:

Development regulations

- Successfully created 272 user accounts to enable MDAs submit their IT
- Project via the IT Projects Clearance Portal
- NITDA has Cleared 154 unique IT Projects of 73 MDAs, with a total amount of ₦1,186,525,676,649.05
- Saved the Federal Government of Nigeria a total of ₦5,057,897,482.

Licensed 59 Data Protection Compliance Organisations (DPCO)

- Inaugurated the Data Breach Investigation Team (DBIT) and Partnership with the NPF for enforcement
- Data Protection sector now valued at ₦2,295,240,000.00
- 230 Compliance & Enforcement Notices; 8 Data breach cases on investigation;
- Imposed the first Nigeria Data Breach Fine to one organization
- Issuance of Guidlines for Management of Personal Data by Public Institutions

Government Digital Services Promotion

- Establishment of Digital Transformation Technical Working Groups (DT-TWGs) across the first 100 MDAs
- Implementation of Nigeria ICT Innovation and Entrepreneurship vision
- Development of National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy
- Development of Draft Government Digital Transformation Strategy assessment for 100 Federal Public Institutions
- Immediate constitution and inauguration of the National eGovernment Masterplan Steering Committee
- Set up of IT departments/Units and cadre for those that are yet to implement the directive

Digital Literacy and Skill

- 200 women in South-West/North-Central were trained on ICT and Entrepreneurship and were each provided with laptops and internet dongles.
- Persons living with Disabilities trained and equipped with laptops in Kano, Enugu states.

NITDA: Life after Oronsaye Report

A new life for NITDA

The December 2016 edition of *IT Edge News* with the title-cover: *Pantami @ NITDA* had inked the poser: *"Will Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami PhD be a transformational director general of the NITDA?"* Pantami, a Professor of Computer Information System at the Islamic University of Madinah, had then spent less than three months in office as director general (DG) of the NITDA. For an agency enmeshed in numerous controversies, the new helmsman came to NITDA with a 'clean-up' brief and a 'To-Do' list of refocusing the agency to its original mandate.

He promised to aggressively build internal capacity of NITDA's workforce so that the agency could follow through with its mandate to regulate IT and ensure technology standardization. By the time Pantami would leave NITDA for a higher assignment as the Minister of Communications (later renamed (Communications and Digital Economy), NITDA was unquestionably an IT regulator you can only ignore as an MDA at your own peril. Pantami raised NITDA's regulatory credentials to a formidable height and handed over the baton to a much younger and equally dynamic Kachifu Inuwa Abdullahi who is increasingly consolidating on the Pantami's era and setting new tones within the dynamics of the industry. Excerpts of this 2017 interview with *IT Edge News* are still as insightful as ever.

By the damning verdict of the Steve Oronsaye's *Presidential Committee on Restructuring and Rationalization of Federal Government Parastatals, Commissions and Agencies*, NITDA should by now be no more than a unit in the Ministry of Communications of Digital Economy.

While the industry waited to see if President Muhammdadu Buhari will implement the recommendations of the committee set up by his predecessor, President Goodluck Jonathan, NITDA quietly took on a new energetic life that would make it one of the most vibrant agencies of the federal government from 2016 till date.

NITDA now appears more proactive in insisting that the industry stakeholders follow government's agenda on local content. What is NITDA's agenda within the framework of local content?

First of all, as you might have known, we have our strategic plan in NITDA; top on it is local content development and promotion. We need to develop our local content in quality and quantity and we need to promote it. Secondly, this is in alignment with the agenda of the federal government. Recently, the Acting President, Yemi Osinbajo before President Buhari came back to the country, issued an executive order which was titled 'Executive Order 003' where he mandated all MDAs to patronize local content, at least 40%.

When that executive order was issued, we immediately mobilized stakeholders and established a standing committee where we feel we need to bring stakeholders onboard to see how we can work collectively. Firstly, to improve the quantity and quality of local content and also to see how we can enforce local content policy, because even before the executive order was issued, we had local content policy.

Some of the stakeholders we invited were Nigerian Computer Society (NCS), Computer Professions Council of Nigeria (CPN), Information Technology Association of Nigeria (ITAN), Association of Telecommunications Companies of Nigeria (ATCON) as well as Institute of Software Practitioners of Nigeria (ISPON) and Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs).

So, we now have a committee of stakeholders and within the agency we have committees, departments and offices that are related to local content development and promotion, like the Office of National Content (ONC), and Office for ICT Innovation & Entrepreneurship (OIIE).

Furthermore, two weeks ago, I was in Lagos and I had a meeting with the OEMs and we discussed elaborately about their challenges and what they feel NITDA can do to support them. At least, 99% of them were in attendance and we discussed the issues elaborately and identified their challenges as well as the areas we could come in to support them. They also asked us to include them as part of the committee and we have done that.

However, their leadership has been part and parcel of the committee I established recently, so they requested we should be meeting quarterly with the leadership of the agency which I approved immediately. This is an indication that we've started working together.

Within the agency the Office for Nigerian Content Development in ICT (ONC) and eGovenment Development and Regulatory have been monitoring the compliance by MDAs. We have been following the budget appropriation and budget approval, we identify any IT project and we call the attention of the relevant MDAs to the patronage of local content. Some that have breached that, we wrote a letter and call their attention to the importance or necessity of patronizing local content.

We also had a meeting with the Bank of Industry (BOI)

on the issue of local content and to patronize local content for the NPower, because when we saw they ordered the purchase of foreign ones, we wrote them a letter and after they saw the letter they came for the meeting. So, we are really monitoring their compliance. If we call their attention and they fail to comply, we will inform the appropriate authorities officially about the breach of the executive order and the local content policy as well, but we always write it politely by calling their attention and reminding them about it. But when they fail to comply, just as drastic problems attract drastic solutions, then we will apply drastic solution to the drastic problem.

What level of achievements have you made in implementing the local content policy?

We have made a lot of achievements actually and you know if the leadership of the country complies, then it is easier for you to convince others to comply. One of the commissions of the federal government under the presidency sent a memo seeking for approval from the Federal Executive Council (FEC), President Muhammadu Buhari was chairing the meeting and the memo was rejected because there was no NITDA's approval. When the president was out of the country, another memo was sent from one of the ministries trying to purchase one software, the Acting President then, Prof. Osinbajo,

chairing the meeting mandated the minister there and then to get in touch with the Minister of Communications, Barr. Adebayo Shittu to seek the approval of NITDA to review it, because we are the custodian of all these things. So, you see the President has complied even the Acting President has complied, so who are you not to comply? The level of compliance of the President and Vice President is more than anyone in this country. Under the Vice President office, there is a project to establish IT parks, the Special Adviser to the Vice President came here and said the VP said anything they want to do must be through NITDA. Even if they want to send a letter to him, it must be through the DG of NITDA because it is part of our mandate.

So, with this, I think it's an encouragement and many MDAs are coming for NITDA's approval even though many still fail to do that. When we notice, we always draw their attention to this. We believe in order to enforce our mandate, there's need for synergy between NITDA and other agencies. This is why two months ago we went to the Economic and Financial Crime Commission, (EFCC) on a courtesy visit in which we sought for their cooperation to support us in enforcing this, which they complied 100 %. The Acting Chairman of EFCC even assured that no IT project at the commission will be executed without the clearance of NITDA. In addition, two weeks ago, he even asked his Head of IT Unit to come to NITDA and discuss about their IT project before they started.

Also, this month we were at the office of the Auditor General for the Federation, he also said henceforth no project at his office will be executed without the clearance of NITDA. To show to us his commitment to compliance, two weeks ago he phoned me, asking we send a representative to be part of a preliminary meeting for their IT project. They wanted me to be represented in the belief that when I am represented, and it comes to any issue of compliance, it will be easier to manage. I sent my Director of Infotech and Infrastructure Solutions and he represented me in the meeting. The Auditor General for the Federation also told his directors if they go to anywhere to audit any IT project, the first thing they should ask for is NITDA's clearance, so if there is no NITDA's clearance it's the first breach of the project. So, all these are ways we are trying to bring other agencies to work with us, because no one can do it alone except through collaboration.

Regulating in times of pandemic

*Exactly three years later (September 21, 2020) when **IT Edge News** will speak with Kashifu Inuwa Abdullahi who had emerged to become the Director General DG) of NITDA after Dr Pantami, and was spending one year in office as NITDA's DG, it was obvious the generational shift in leadership at the agency was focusing on sustaining the tempo for IT regulations as well as pushing the IT development frontiers for emerging technologies and tech entrepreneurships among others.*

During the interaction, Abdullahi spoke on the challenges of regulating a sector that is perpetually in transition; how NITDA has responded to COVID-19 to expand the window for tech innovations and why leadership sits well on youth, particularly in the ICT sector and why being a director general of an agency like NITDA imposes a higher sense of responsibility in meeting diverse expectations in a society as complex as Nigeria. The excerpts offer insights into projecting NITDA's future in its 20th anniversary.

How is COVID-19 impacting on your ability to regulate and carry out development programmes?

Thank you very much and thank you for having me. Like they say, in every pandemic or in every difficult situation, there is a hidden opportunity or a silver lining. For me, the COVID-19 has made our activities more profound.

Before the pandemic, technology generally is seen as emerging, in terms of people embracing it, or people digitizing their processes. People were generally already using technology to enable most of their processes.

But when the pandemic hits, it accelerated the adoption of technology; and then of course, you have to accelerate in terms of regulation. They say technology changes at the speed of light while law changes at the speed of policy makers. You can't always predict how soon technology will change. But, you know, most of the time, in law, you will see there is a lacuna or a point at which you need to turn things around.

NDPR

With the pandemic, we had to find a way we can accelerate in terms of regulation. We started with the NDPR [Nigeria Data Protection Regulation], for instance; as a result of the pandemic, there was huge data collection from the frontline MDAs [ministries, departments and agencies]and even other people trying to help. They collected information, personal information, so to speak. We started with issuing a supplementary regulation for public institutions because you need to give them some special considerations as there was a need to balance between issues such as life andlivelihood, privacy and the rights around personal informationeven in the face of the pandemic so we started with the NDPR.

Cybersecurity

Also, we looked at the cybersecurity in general. Because of the way people were embracing technology; the rise in technology adaptation, there was a surge in cybercrime as well. Cybercriminalstriedto exploit the situation. Because of the pandemic, people were panicking. The pandemic created uncertainty and people were and are still looking for help. Some criminals exploit the situation and globally. There has been significant

The pandemic also led to scarcity of protective equipment and other essentials which cybercriminals readily tried to exploit. There were cases whereby people will tell you they have that equipment, you give them your card details, you even make payments and at the end, they won't deliver anything, because they were just exploiting the situation to come up with those fraudulent activities.

So, we had to scale up our cybersecurity responses to tackle the problem. We deployed three strategies. Firstly, is awareness we increased our awareness campaigns. We issued public notices and so on. Secondly, is about prevention. sOn the prevention aspect, we issued a guideline. Even as we speak now, there is new policy and guideline the ministry is working on to address remote working and information security in general. We have sent the draft to the Honourable Minister and the ministry is doing the final touches.

Then, we also upgraded our CERRC the Computer Emergency Response and Readiness Centre, which was launched this week. All theseare to help address the negative impacts of the pandemic in terms of cybercrimes.

Digitization means new opportunities

We have also looked at COVID-19 from the perspective of new opportunities. What can we do to get the most out of this pandemic because as it accelerates digitization that means it is going to open opportunities in that area?

We came up with the Business Process Outsourcing [BPO] Guideline for which we did a stakeholders' review and it has reached an advancedstage so that very soon, we will start its implementation. That will help us come up with new decent jobs for our younger generation because we have a competitive age in Nigeria.If we look at the key players in that market segment like India and Bangladesh, we have more English-speaking people and we have a better time zone than those countries. With these advantages, there is a competitive edge we need to leverage on.

With pandemic, we are alsolooking in the area of emerging technologies. We are working on strategies for artificial intelligence. We are working on a blockchain strategy and alsohow to get the most out of this digitization. The pandemic is helping to accelerate innovations, acceptance or how people embrace technology and so we are doing a lot in terms of regulations as well.

You are one of the youngest leaders in the country; you are also one year in office. What has it meant to you being young in a country like this and being put in a position to set agenda? What really moves you, what are the things you really want to look back at and say yes, I did it?

There are two things. Firstly, I have a name I need to protect because as I was growing up, my father always told me, be honest in whatever you do. He used to tell me if you lie one time you have to lie ten times to cover that lie but if you always say the truth, you have nothing to hide. So, I have a name to protect and this is a responsibility given to me I have a family name to protect.

I need to also demonstrate that the person who recommended me, that's my mentor and my boss, the **Minister of Communications and Digital Economy [Dr Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami],** he recommended my name to the president, I need to also protect that confidence he has in me because if I failed it is not that I have failed myself, I'm also failing him for that recommendation he made.

Also, I have to protect the integrity of the youth, they are a lot of people sayings that the youth cannot do it, they don't have the experience or they don't have the exposure and so on, so with the "Not Too Young To Run", I think this government also understands that sometimes age is just a number So what matters is whether you can deliver. I need to protect that trust and confidence because if I failed, I'm not failing myself I'm failing my family, I'm failing the person that recommended me I'm failing the person that appointed me and I'm failing the youths in general that is, the generation that I represent. These four things drive me and these are the four things that keep me awake at night to make sure I deliver onthe responsibilities.

SOME NITDA'S ACHIEVEMENTS

- Conducted Training for 30 MDAs on Digital Identity for Development.
- Established NITDA Academy for Research & Training with over 26,000 active students
- Trained 1,000 Artisans in 4 Geo-Political Zones (North East, North West, North Central, and South West).
- Creation of the National Adopted Village for Smart Agriculture (NAVSA) and the Smart Agriculture App for precision farming.
- Trained 145 leading Farmers on Smart Agriculture Practice and modern system of farming
- Trained 145 leading Farmers on Smart Agriculture Practice and modern system of farming

Solid Infrastructure

- Deployment of 80 Digital Capacity Training Centres (DCTCs) nationwide
- The Agency deployed 3 Special Purpose IT Hubs
  The Agency completed the construction of 4 IT Innovation & Incubation Parks in University of Port Harcourt, ATBU Bauchi, Kogi State University, Gombe State University
- The Agency deployed 4 Special Purpose Community IT Training Centres
- The Agency is in the process of deploying 4 Special Purpose Capacity Development Centres; Digital society and emerging technologies
- Streamlined Capacity Building Programme for Virtual Library Stakeholders
- Successful completion of institutional capacity building Programme for Librarians, Lecturers, Students and other Researchers at Tertiary Institutions
- Successfully carried out specialized CISCO Appreciation Training for 150 NYSC and SIWES students, mostly on their primary assignment with the Agency.

Local and International promotion of Nigerian IT sector

- Successful representation of Nigeria at Gulf Information Technology Exhibitions (GITEX) since 2014 to provide international point of engagements on IT for public & private entities as well as the startup ecosystem
- Continuous support for the startup ecosystem; promotion of national interests in emerging technologies set up of the **National Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics** Successful hosting of e-Nigeria International Conference, Exhibitions and Awards to foster interest in local developments in ICT

NITDA HAS GROWN BEYOND THE DREAMS OF ITS FOUNDERS

Reinvents itself to meet the digital age challenges
- Kashifu Inuwa Abdullahi

NITDA @ 20
ANNIVERSARY LECTURE

Today is a double celebration of the NITDA 20th anniversary lecture and the launch of *our Strategic Roadmap and Action Plan 2021-2024.*

First and foremost, my heart goes to the family of Dr Ashiru Daura who passed away late last week. Dr Ashiru Daura was a former acting DG of the Agency, May his gentle soul rest in perfect peace, amin.

Secondly, I would like to express our gratitude to the past Director Generals of NITDA from late Prof Gabriel Olalere Ajayi, Prof Cleopas Officer Angaye, Mr Peter Jack to my immediate predecessor Dr Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami. Our gratitude also goes to those who led the Agency in acting capacity, the late Dr Ashiru Daura and Dr Vincent Olatunji. We sincerely recognise and appreciate their contribution to making NITDA what it is today.

Jean Monnet, a French political economist and diplomat who initiated comprehensive economic planning in western Europe after World War II said **"nothing is possible without men, but nothing lasts without institutions".**

Twenty years is a significant milestone in the life of any institution. Some of the biggest companies in the world today were established in the last twenty years or less. Therefore, it is critical for

⏸

Our impact is visible across the country, and this can be attested to by the outcomes. Just recently, our sector, the ICT sector bailed Nigeria out of a covid-induced recession that was predicted to crush the Nigerian spirit. We have attracted more foreign investments into the digital economy sector than any developing country globally

⏸

NITDA to introspect its past and project into the future, set new targets, and improve for the better.

As I mentioned earlier, today's event is twofold. The first part will review the purpose of NITDA's existence and reflect on the journey so far, and the second part will unveil the next phase of

the journey.

The theme for the day *Growth and Resilience* is exciting because it captures the moment. NITDA has grown beyond the dreams of its founders. NITDA was established to implement the Nigerian National IT Policy, which I can confidently say that we have delivered 100% with higher and deeper impacts to our economy.

Now, we talk of resilience because NITDA sees digital technologies as a source of inspiration to reinvent and meet the digital age challenges in an increasingly dynamic and competitive world.

There is no doubt that NITDA has made a difference and touched the lives of more than 2.5 million Nigerians. Our impact is visible across the country, and this can be attested to by the outcomes. Just recently, our sector, the ICT sector bailed Nigeria out of a covid-induced recession that was predicted to crush the Nigerian spirit.

We have attracted more foreign investments into the digital economy sector than any developing country globally. Our developmental regulations have created new economic industry such as business process outsourcing, data protection and a robust software industry**.**

Despite the modest achievements recorded by the Agency, we are not oblivious of the multi-dimensional challenges confronting our country. But we believe there is a silver lining for innovation to create prosperity for all. We have an excellent opportunity to leapfrog into the future through the 4th industrial revolution.

We are blessed with the most prominent black diaspora, resilient and resourceful youths, solid and diverse culture, abundant natural resources etc. The NITDA of the next decade is prepared to act as an institutional catalyst to actualise the long-held dream of every Nigerian to build a Nation where peace, prosperity and justice shall reign.

The foundation for this dream has been laid by President Muhammadu Buhari's administration, championed by the Honourable Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, Dr Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami, who has a laser-focused vision of digitalising Nigeria. This vision has been well articulated by the Nigeria Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS).

The NDEPS is an overarching policy vision that needs strategic action by all relevant stakeholders to become a reality. NITDA, no doubt, is pivotal to the implementation of the NDEPS. It is for this purpose that the Agency has initiated a thorough strategy drafting process as introduced by my predecessor Dr Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami. This process was carried out in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders by identifying gaps and opportunities in Nigeria's digital economy aspiration. Critical government policies and documents such as the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy, National Digital Innovation and Entrepreneurship policy, National Broadband Action Plan, Cybersecurity Policy, amongst others, were consulted to have strategy coherence. This process was culminated in the NITDA Strategic Roadmap Plan and Action Plan (SRAP).

The objectives of the Strategy are: to articulate a new strategy for NITDA in accordance with the current aspirations of the Government, the realities of today and the demands of the future; to contribute its quota towards the implementation of NDEPS, especially within the framework of its mandate; and to implement programs that would facilitate the digital transformation of Nigeria.

This SRAP is built on seven pillars with their respective goals and objectives, which are:

1) Developmental Regulation: This pillar will foster dynamic regulatory instruments that will unlock opportunities across different sectors of the economy.

> **The foundation for this dream has been laid by President Muhammadu Buhari's administration, championed by the Honourable Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, Dr Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami, who has a laser-focused vision of digitalising Nigeria. This vision has been well articulated by the Nigeria Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS).**

2) Digital Literacy and Skills: This pillar will enable the development of digital skills of Nigerians across different works of life as well as support the goal of achieving a 95% digital literacy level in the next ten years.

3) Digital Transformation: This pillar will provide a robust digital platform to drive digitalisation processes in the digital economy.

4) Digital Innovation & Entrepreneurship: This pillar will enable innovation-driven enterprises and Micro, small and medium enterprises to thrive. We expect that the outcome of this pillar will create opportunities for job creation.

5) Cybersecurity: This pillar will strengthen cyberspace and reduce vulnerabilities exploitable by threat actors to create a vibrant digital economy. This will, in turn, protect the digital asset and allow citizens to have confidence in the digital economy.

6) Emerging Technologies: This pillar will facilitate the adoption and adaptation of emerging technologies in Nigeria. This pillar will map the development of the digital economy with sustainable development goals in providing quality education, poverty eradication, good health and well-being, reducing inequalities et cetera.

7) Promotion of Indigenous Content: This pillar will create an enabling environment for promoting and adopting indigenous innovation for a digital economy. This pillar will develop indigenous products and services, increase patronage, and create an enabling condition for iterative problem-solving by indigenous digital technology.

Notably, every pillar has its goals, initiatives to drive the attainment of the goals, objectives and desired impact. Additionally, we introduced a new approach by formation of workstreams into the implementation process. This workstream approach will aid the harmonisation of roles, smoother planning, cross pollination of ideas and better inter-departmental planning.

In conclusion, I want to assure you that our best days are yet to come. We have all we need to become the best we can. NITDA is willing, able and ready to support every Nigerian to achieve the goal of a digital and prosperous Nigeria.

Thank you for listening, and may God Almighty bless you.

God Bless NITDA.

God Bless the Federal Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy.

God Bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Excerpts of remarks by the Director General/CEO, National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), Kashifu Inuwa Abdullahi, CCIE at the NITDA@20 Anniversary Lecture and launch of the SRAP (2021-2024) held on Thursday, 29th April 2021.

Congratulations, NITDA

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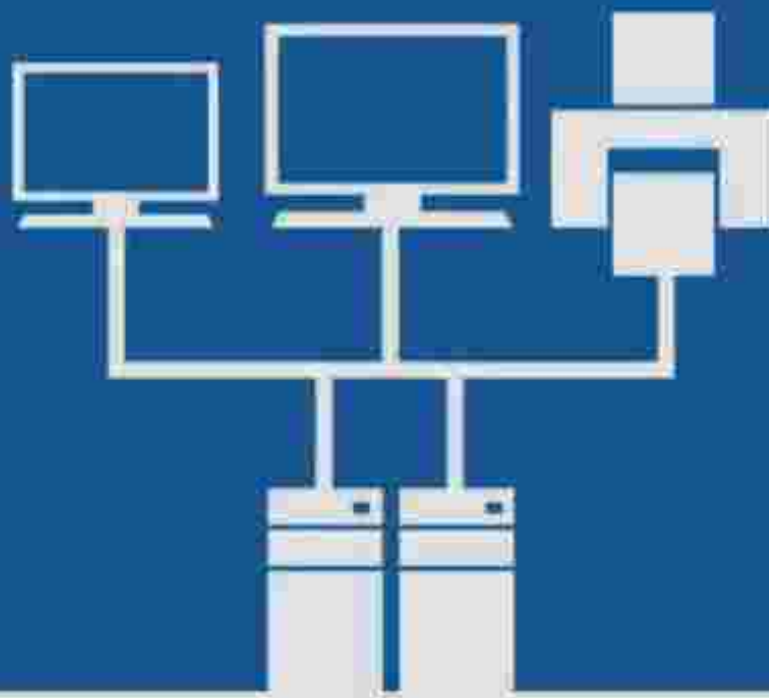
Innovation is a vital key to the **prosperity of any nation**

- Kashifu Inuwa Abdullahi

UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

The UN recognises the importance of creativity and innovation to humanity, hence designated the 21st of April as the World Creativity and Innovation Day. The celebration started four years ago, on the 21st of April 2018.

Innovation is a vital key to the prosperity of any nation, and our prospects for future economic growth largely hinges on our ability to innovate. Innovation is the ability to invent and drive those inventions towards commercialisation and job creation. It is not surprising that the wealthier nations lead in innovation. Even emerging superpowers like China are now reaping the benefits of their technology-innovation initiatives and policies.

Innovations, particularly market-creating innovations, have the potential to transform nations and lift them out of poverty. Market-creating innovation pulls infrastructure and investments that can transform the economy and create prosperity. We learned from history how Henry Ford

Thank you for coming. It is truly a pleasure and privilege to have you this afternoon. Today is a double celebration of NITDA's 20th Anniversary and World Creativity and Innovation Day. It is an International Creativity and Innovation Day recognised by the United Nations and designated to celebrate creativity and innovation as well as raise awareness of the importance of creativity and innovation in problem solving to advance the

Honourable Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, Dr Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami, makes his remarks at the World Creativity & Innovation Day. part of activities to mark NITDA's 20 Years Anniversary.
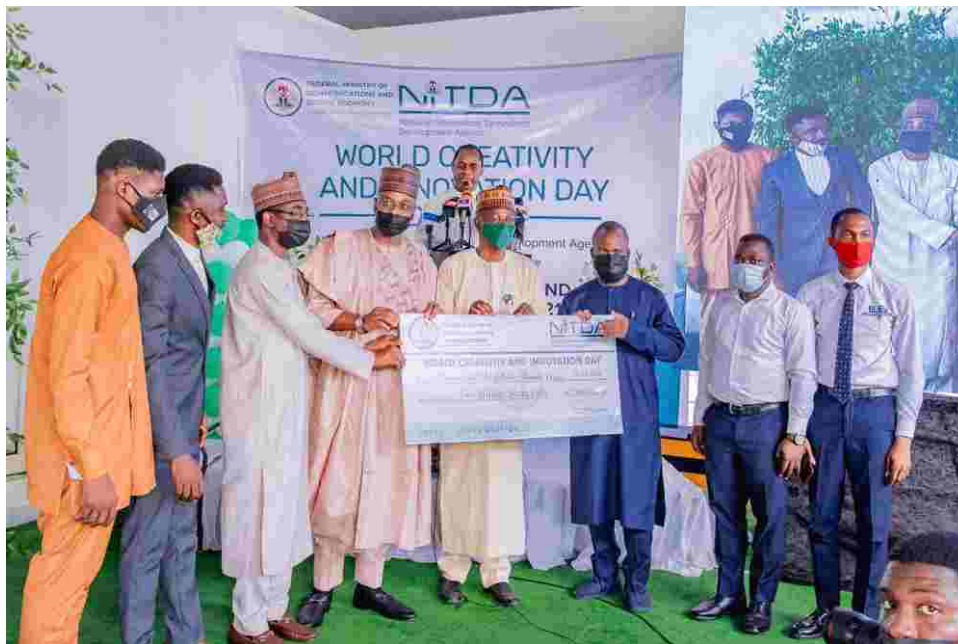
DG of NITDA, Abdullahi watches as the Honourable Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, Dr Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami, presents a seed fund of Two Million Naira to winners of NITDAat20 Innovation Challenge, part of activities to mark the NITDA's 20 Years Anniversary and World Creativity & Innovation Day.

The Nigerian digital innovation space is making waves on the African continent and beyond. According to a report by the Startup Genome and a survey on Nigerian Micro, Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (MSMEs), there are about 6,500 MSMEs, some in the digital space, with Lagos having about 700 digital innovation registered businesses worth over $2 billion. It is also noteworthy that Nigeria's bustling fintech ecosystem, with over 200 fintech standalone companies, has attracted global attention and venture capital investment.

At NITDA, we have identified innovation as a critical tool for implementing the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS). We have taken bold steps to drive our nation's prosperity by boosting digital innovation and entrepreneurship. Today, we celebrate this day within the National Center for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics premises, one of our initiatives to drive technology and market-creating innovations through the use of emerging technologies.

The National Center for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics is purposely built to drive cutting-edge innovations in emerging technologies through robust research and development programs. Of course, we plan to boost innovation-driven enterprises (IDEs) through innovations, thereby creating many jobs for Nigeria's teeming youths.

We are deeply committed to fostering digital innovation culture among Nigerians. We have several programs and initiatives aimed at boosting the innovative capacity of our youths, which include catch-them-young programs targeted at orienting Nigerian kids to become

introduced the Ford Model T in the United States and the transformation it brought to America. Likewise, just about twenty years ago, when Mo Ibrahim started Celtel in Africa, people laughed at him that he will fail. Here we are, today, the telecommunications industry is the most vibrant economic sector on the continent. It has transformed societies and provided jobs to millions of citizens by creating new markets and opportunities.

> **At NITDA, we have identified innovation as a critical tool for implementing the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (NDEPS). We have taken bold steps to drive our nation's prosperity by boosting digital innovation and entrepreneurship.**

active players in the digital technology space.

We are recalibrating our activities to focus on strengthening the Innovation ecosystem, promoting the adoption of emerging technologies for sustainable development, digital job creation, and promoting Nigerian content development and adoption.

In line with our goals of strengthening the innovation ecosystem, we drive catalytic programs, like hackathons and innovation challenges that will foster innovation culture. It will also enhance the hubs, where innovative ideas are conceptualised and nurtured. Our programmes are designed to build innovation and entrepreneurship capabilities across Nigeria. Some of our key initiatives specifically designed to support the innovation ecosystem are Technology Entrepreneurship and Innovation Support (TIES) Scheme, Bridge to MassChallenge Nigeria and MIT-REAP Abuja. Another laudable project we initiated is the Entrepreneurship Mentoring Initiative (EMI), designed to provide mentorship services to Nigerian innovators and entrepreneurs.

Our drive towards building a robust framework and infrastructure to bolster technology innovation for all Nigerians has the firm and usual support of the Honourable Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, Dr Isa Ali Ibrahim [Pantami], FNCS, FBCS, FIIM, MCPN. The Honourable Minister, who formulated the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy for Digital Nigeria, is also championing many initiatives and policies that will ignite innovation activities and create wealth and prosperity for our citizens.

Once again, it is my pleasure to welcome you all to this double celebration of NITDA @ 20 and World Creativity and Innovation Day.

Thank you for your attention.
May God bless you and bless Nigeria.

Excerpts of Welcome Remarks by Kashifu Inuwa Abdullahi, CCIE, the Director General/CEO, National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), during the World Creativity and Innovation Day (WCID) celebration as part of NITDA @20 Anniversary activities held on Monday, the 21st of April, 2021.

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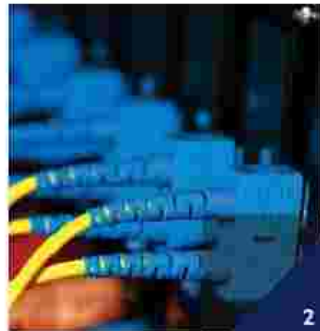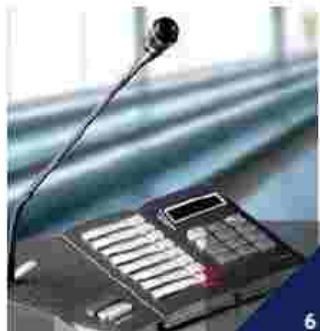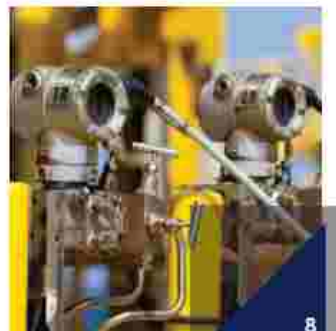
1. Telecoms Transmissions & Infrastructures.
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4. Security & Surveillance Systems.
5. Mobile & Security Communications Systems.
6. PAGA, Congress and Conferencing Systems.
7. Information Management/ InfoTech .
8. Automation, SCADA systems & Instrumentation Systems..
9. ICT & Telecoms Applications Power Supply
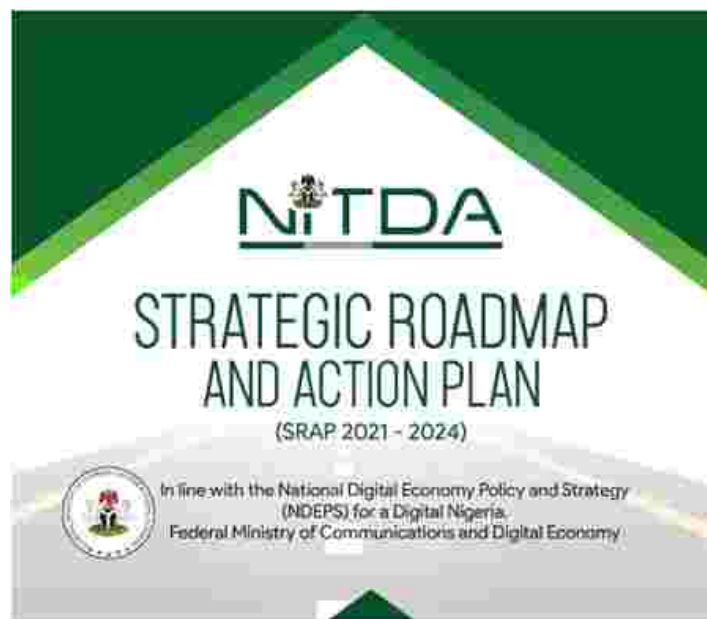10. Telephony and Voice Applications & Systems.

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20 years after, NITDA faces future with a new Strategic Roadmap and Action Plan

Here are the highlights of where NITDA is focusing on in the next four years. The new SRAP appears to stress that building Nigeria as an economic giant via ICT begins today.

By Olubayo Abiodun

Nigeria is a massive cluster of bright minds and very intelligent innovators, IT & ICT gurus and masterminds in the telecoms ecosystems. Regardless, the activities in this converged ecosystem seem to be taking place in a slow motion. Nonetheless, majority still struggle to glean their daily meals from these uncharted paths. The unstructured coordination left most of the potentials largely untapped and leading to lost opportunities and massive resource leakages. And those superintending the informal space continue to have their canapés and espressos. And there lies the real and present danger to the nation's economic rebirth. If Nigeria does not amplify its drive towards attaining global economic prominence, using IT and ICT as the catalyst of growth and development, it would have missed the golden opportunity to emphatically affirm the axiom that the journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step. Since it is often stressed by popular truism that Rome was not built in a day, Nigeria's quest to become a key factor in the digital economies of the 21st Century, it is imperative that the nation's strategic leaders and stakeholders must take the bull by the horns to make a giant leap out of the current economic dire straits.

Oil is gone; ICT will unlock the new Nigeria
Oil is drying up and the nation is more than ever confronted with the realities of the expiring quantum of oil wells in Nigeria. This reality has further given sordid fillip to the decreasing relevance of oil in the global energy mix and the concomitant drastic drops in oil revenues which remains a significant portion of the revenues basket in Nigeria's economy. The resultant shaky impacts on the stability of the nation's economy has forced the hand of government and other stakeholders in the private sector to demand for the refocusing of the mono-economy to complete diversification in order to create a robust capacity to meet the buoyant global realities.

In the last one year and there about, the magnificent impact of start-ups and the global tractions that brands like Kobo360, Paystack and Flutterwave gave Nigeria has been huge. What the IT, ICT and Telecoms as well as the relatively young technology innovators are giving to the nations GDP is enormous. This is obviously the new Nigeria that the NITDA roadmap is targeting, all other things being equal. And if all goes well as projected and the NITDA roadmap receives the overwhelming acceptance by the state and non-state actors, then unlocking the new Nigeria may no longer be far-fetched.

Today, the sing-song in the country, particularly from the temple of stakeholders, is the strident calls for the diversification of Nigeria's economy. The upsurge in the contributions of IT, ICT and Telecoms to the resource portfolio of the nation's revenue stream has increasingly validated the push to reduce the over dependence on Oil and Gas in the largely mono-based economy. NITDA's mandate is pivotal to the realisation of the digitization and digitalization programmes of the Nigerian federation. And the key points in the economic transformation trajectories include the

volume of the Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs) and the capacity of the public and private institutions to ensure openness, transparency, and efficiency in the government processes.

Some takeaways of the Roadmap

If the roadmap as prudently outlined and projected is efficiently and effectively followed through by the strategic state and non-state actors, it is no gain saying that the benefits are humongous to the transformation of the nation in the line of digital economy. And that would be in direct compliance with the 21st Century economic outlook. By providing the legal framework for information technology development, pioneering IT developmental projects, facilitating access to information technology goods and services, catalysing job creation and ensuring national security, NITDA'a roadmap will assist Nigeria to gain enormous strength to be classified as a nation on the digital plane. In today's world, the lifestyle of the entire human race is being disrupted daily by the evolving new technologies. The way humans socialise, do business, play as political animals and government to government activities have been significantly disrupted by the new technologies evolving at the speed of light. To avoid regrets of monumental proportion, Nigeria must immediately join the fray to avoid catastrophic socio-economic, political and technological setback that may consign it as a beggarly entity in the comity of nations.

Is the Roadmap enough by itself as a document?

Given the decrepit state of the nation's infrastructure, low capital budget commitment to IT infrastructure, inadequacy of capacity building in ICTs skills, how far can the NITDA roadmap

Honourable Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, Dr Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami, unveils the new SRAP. With him is the Director General of NITDA, Mallam Kachifu Inuwa Abdullahi, and other senior functionaries including CEO of NIGCOMSAT, Dr. Abimbola Alale and CEO/EVC of NCC, Prof Umar Danbatta

❚❚
And if all goes well as projected and the NITDA roadmap receives the overwhelming acceptance by the state and non-state actors, then unlocking the new Nigeria may no longer be far-fetched.❚❚

really accomplish the designated agenda for the digitization and the transformation of the nation to a digital economy? What about the inconsistency in policy environment, are we building strong institutions or the nation's MDAs is enmeshed in the politics of regime change and partisan politics where the baby and the bath water are thrown away once there is a change in the political party that controls the centre from the previous administration. Are the political leaders and senior government career administrators aligned in their thoughts on the policy direction in the roadmap? Do political appointees take time to understand the direction of the roadmap met on the ground or for whatever interest a rolling plan is jettisoned as soon as a new appointee gets on the saddle?

Discipline is fundamental to the success of the beautiful plans drawn up in the NITDA roadmap. But be it as it may, discipline, transparency, openness in the presentation and management of data alone may not unlock a growth miracle, yet if they help, nations avoid costly setbacks and it won't be insignificant. However, not being able to coordinate a framework for the transformation of country's economy into the future of the 21st Century digital outlook is eerie. This is where this effort of NITDA is commendable and must be applauded.

However, like other agencies in its ilk, Nigeria is not in short supplies of brilliantly and intelligently framed policy

instruments, the challenges more often than not is not with the framers of the document but the shortage of political will and absence of the right leadership to interpret the content of the policy document for the public good.

It is the same reason Nigeria did not feature prominently in the global industrial revolution up to the 3rd industrial outlook. The 4th industrial revolution is a leveller if the nation can seize the moment by deploying its IT and ICT capabilities to energise its digital economy. Nigerian youths playing in the start-ups space have demonstrated enormous potentials to position the country in pole's position for a good slice of the $11.5 trillion global digital economy.

However, this may not be a cheap cake to slice if the derelict infrastructure and open sleaze at the front offices of the nation's global interface continues unabated. Foreign investors have very low tolerance for corruption and inefficient processes. This 'disease' more often than not is man-made. Take for instance, the compromising attitude of compatriots manning the consular needs of foreign investors. In the same vein, the attitude of Immigration Officers managing the passport document of travellers leaves much to be desired. Despite the introduction of online processes to limit human interface, the systemic rots has been deliberated integrated to make human interface perpetually unavoidable. Ditto for the processes for the renewal of Nigeria's driver license.

NITDA has been strategically positioned to create awareness in the public sector, facilitate digital literacy, and develop standard guidelines as well as framework for government agencies to ensure proper handshakes. The intra and inter agency links in the public and private sectors is essential for the seamless and healthy growth and developments in the nation's economy. This is how the upsurge in the contributions of IT and ICT to the nation's GDP which started with less than 0.5 per cent in 2001 to an all-time high of 14 per cent in 2020 can be sustained. To even improve on these current performances and also boost job creations and energize innovative activities in the tech ecosystem, this roadmap ought to be given all the requisite supports as the fulcrum of Nigeria's digital economy transformation.

SRAP is vista for emerging technologies, new industries

There is so much more to be achieved with the digital inclusion and literacy. This would eventually be impactful in the evolving new sectors such as Fintech, eCommerce, Venture Capital Investments (VCI), Business Process Outsourcing (BPO), Data Protection Compliance Organisation (DPCO), IT Equipment Manufacturing and Software Engineering which are gradually and steadily gaining tractions in the economic ecosystems across the country.

NITDA's pioneer roadmap marshalled by its immediate past Director General and now Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, Dr Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami, was from 2017 2020. This particular roadmap was anchored on seven pillars: IT Regulations, Local Content Development and Promotion,

Cybersecurity, Government Digital Service Promotion, Digital Job Creation, Digital Inclusion, and Capacity Building.

Various achievements have been recorded in these areas though it cannot be said that any of these pillars has achieved Eldorado. With the progress made in this previous roadmap, it is imperative that pushing the frontiers of the 186 page **NITDA Strategic Roadmap and Action Plan (SRAP 2021 2024)** would naturally consolidate the building blocks already laid for the integration of Nigeria into the digital economic space. Like its precursor, the new document is hinged on seven pillars: Digital Innovation &Entrepreneurship, Promotion of Indigenous Content, Digital Transformation, Digital Literacy and Skills, Emerging Technology, Cybersecurity and Developmental Regulations. Each of these pillars have strategic initiatives based on identified objectives. And these different initiatives are further delineated into activities which are also further structured into implementation plans.

The long and short of SRAP objectives is about using technology to increase productivity, efficiency and effectiveness of government machinery, reduction in revenue leakages and wastages, cutting off the channels of sleaze and corruption by limiting human interfaces which makes people vulnerable to abuse of processes.

The Challenges

The greatest structural drawbacks for the successes of this policy thrust would be the challenging power inadequacy in the country. Electricity is crucial, particularly sustainable clean power is essential for the operations and lifespan of the highly capital intensive IT infrastructure being deployed for the digital economy.

Also, the understanding and acceptance of the concept of digital economy by the political office holders and administrators of government machineries is pivotal to the overall successes of SRAP. That is one crucial way of stemming the culture of policy summersault and routine abuse of policy outlines. The culture of impunity in the procurement processes and deliberate abuse and sabotage of the technical architecture must be equally addressed. Again poor capital ratio for technology acquisition and adoption must be significantly addressed to sustain the current tempo in the journey towards the digital economy transformation. In addition, the poor maintenance culture must be replaced with the culture of consistencies in maintenance of the equipment and infrastructure. More importantly, a proper alignment and re-alignment of the IT and ICT Curricula is fundamental to achieving global standards and best practices. Inadequacy of training infrastructure and paucity of the training contents would naturally deliver poor skills development.

Creating Innovation Parks as Centres of Excellence in each states of the federation would go a long way in supporting the vision and mission of NITDA encapsulated in SRAP 2021 2024.

Journalist and technology analyst, Olubayo Abiodun has extensive experience in the public and private sectors having worked with NITEL/MTEL and Multilinks after years of active service as a journalist at the Punch Newspapers.

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"In April 2012, there was a recommendation by the Orosanye Committee to scrap NITDA but today, no one talking about scrapping the agency but the present discussion is how to give additional responsibilities to the agency, this is a significant change. "

-Hon. Min of Communications and Digital Economy,
Dr Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami.

-Hon. Min of Communications and Digital Economy, Dr Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami., DG, NITDA, Mall. Kashifu Abdullahi Inuwa and other dignitaries at the NITDA @ 20 Anniversary

-Hon. Min of Communications and Digital Economy, Dr Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami making his remark at the event

Hon. Min of Communications and Digital Economy, Dr Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami.

Mallam Kashifu Inuwa Abdullahi DG, NITDA making his speech
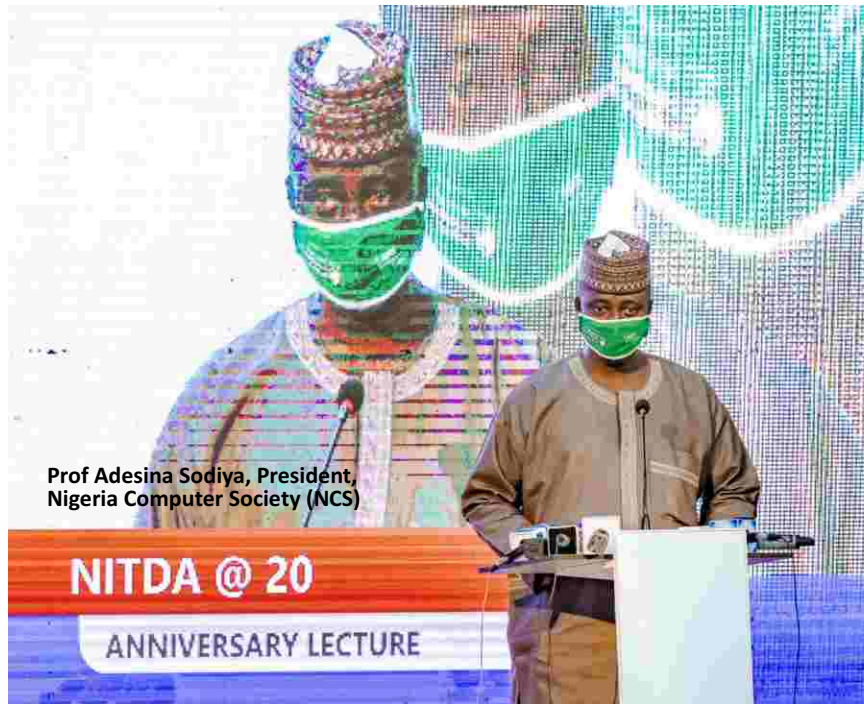
Prof Adesina Sodiya, President, Nigeria Computer Society (NCS)

NITDA @ 20
ANNIVERSARY LECTURE

Dr Abimbola Alale, CEO, NIGCOMSAT

CEO, NIMC, Engr Aliyu Aziz

CEO, Consultancy Support Services Limited, Abdul-Hakeem Ajijola, *delivering the NITDA @ 20 Anniversary Lecture.*

The Minister unveils the start of NITDA @ 20 anniversary ceremony

Hurray! NITDA is 20. Dr. Pantami cuts the cake helped by DG of NITDA, Mall. Abdullahi and other dignitaries

29 April   11.00 AM

Digital Economy Complex, Mbora, Abuja.

www.nitda.gov.ng

The Minister having a chat with the DG of NITDA, Abdullahi, EVC of NCC, Prof Danbatta and others

Prof Umar Danbatta, EVC, NCC

20th Anniversary Lecture
Celebrating Growth and Resilience

Thursday   11.00 AM

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NITDA @ 20 Anniversary

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- **The Honourable Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, Dr Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami, FNCS, FBCS, FIIM, MCPN**
- **Director General/CEO, National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), Mallam Kashifu Inuwa Abdullahi, CCIE**
- **The Management, Board of Directors and Staff of the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA)**

ALDAPCON - the umbrella body for all DPCOs in Nigeria - is happy to associate with your milestone achievements notably in the data privacy, protection industry that has become a leading light on the continent under your watch.

Signed
Tunde Balogun, Convener, ADADPCON

Congratulations, NITDA

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