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Open session

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“INTERVENTIONS IN THE GROWTH OF CULTURAL INDUSTRIES IN NIGERIA” BEING THE PRESENTATION BY: MR M. M. MAIDUGU, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR ARTS AND CULTURE, ABUJA – NIGERIA, AT THE “OPEN SESSIONS” OF THE 5TH WORLD SUMMIT ON ARTS AND CULTURE, MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA 2011

INTRODUCTION:

The centrality of culture and its potentials to the development of mankind as a basic idea has come to receive global acclamation and total acceptance. Culture is said to be man’s design for living. It is the totality of a people’s practices in any given entity.

This presentation attempts to focus on some Cultural Industries in Nigeria and how they have progressed over the years in terms of contributions to national development, the interplays and collaborations with other Sectors of human endeavour such as health, education, mass mobilization, technology, communication, agriculture, poverty reduction and human capacity development with reasonable emphasis on women and the youths in line with the theme “Creative Intersections”.

The Cultural Industries to be examined in this presentation will be mainly interventions in the Indigenous Knowledge as exemplified in the practice of Herbal Medicine in Nigeria and the Nigeria Home Video/Movie Industry – Nollywood, with some reference to Crafts development as in Indigenous Textile Industry and the Indigenous Pottery Technology (Ceramic) where similar interventions had been made. These Cultural Industries have grown out of the Cultural practices of the various communities where they exist, are the result of the creative ingenuity of the people and creative intersections as they experiment with nature and their environment.

Finally, the presentation hopes to show how arts and culture, consequent upon creative intersections and interplay with other sectors, coupled with the creative instincts of minds in the cultural industries have progressed steadily thereby leading to enhanced commitment, national development and improved standard of living for the citizenry.

INTERVENTION IN INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE – HERBAL MEDICINE

Eighty (80%) percent of Africans have used one form of herbal product or the other at least once in their life journey. This is a major cultural industry that is as old as man and has remained very relevant for the sustenance and development of the human race for ages. In Nigeria, the once degraded herbal medicinal products which most people treated with a lot of skepticism have evolved in its mode of production/techniques, administration, finishing and packaging that they are now prescribed in government approved hospitals and sold in government licensed pharmacies. On daily basis, global attention is being drawn to the potency and efficacy of herbal medicinal products; and

Nigeria is being caught by the bug. Having come to the realization that well over 85% of the country's 150 million people occasionally use herbal medicinal products and over 70% of rural population depend on herbal medicine for their health care delivery. The federal government by way of intervention in the sector formulated deliberate policies to sustain and promote this very important aspect of the living culture of Nigerians.

What did the Government do? Since the practice of traditional/herbal medicine is an integral part of every known culture in Nigeria and existed in every community, town, local government area and state, the government in consultation with stakeholders formulated policies and created institutions to encourage collaborations with various sectors of the economy, support, monitor and regulate the activities of herbal medicine practitioners. To achieve the above, the government embarked on the following:-

INSTITUTIONS

Government established institutions with specific mandates in relation to the registration, harmonization, standardization, collaborations, advocacy, promotion and regulation of the practice. The Federal government institutions are as follows:-

- i. The National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control – NAFDAC.
- ii. The National Council For Arts and Culture (NCAC)
- iii. The National Institute For Pharmaceutical Research
- iv. The Federal Ministry of Health and its Parastatals.
- v. The Federal Ministry of Science and Technology and its relevant Parastatals.

In addition to the above, Presidential Initiative Committee on the promotion, development and commercialization of Herbal Medicinal Products in Nigeria was established.

With the establishment of the above agencies with mandates affecting herbal medicine, the visibility of synergy and partnership between arts and culture and the intersections with sector such as agriculture, science, technology, health, marketing and management, tourism, education, finance, governance and communal bonding for economic and social well being is obvious.

REGISTRATION AND ASSOCIATIONS

Practitioners were encouraged to form associations and register their practice at the local government, state and Federal levels. Practitioners in similar areas of practice were encouraged and supported to form viable cooperatives. Since herbal medicine in Nigeria is rural and culture based, most of them are registered by the National Council for Arts and Culture and the state counterparts. With the registration and formation of an umbrella body to oversee and channel the activities and desires of these numerous practitioners to government, known as the National Association of Herbal and Traditional Medicine Practitioners (NANTMP), more social commitment and bonding was created between practitioners.

FUNDING

Governments at different levels support the practitioners through the various associations. With the formation of the associations, governments at regular intervals embark on capacity building and advocacy programmes for practitioners. This has created awareness about their activities and encouraged them to form cooperatives which in turn enable them access fund from micro-credit schemes and other financial institutions.

CLINICAL TRIALS AND CONTROL

Any herbal medicinal product in Nigeria found in pharmacy or an approved sales outlet must have undergone necessary clinical trials and been certified safe for human consumption and efficacy. The National Institute for Pharmaceutical Research and the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration) are empowered and charged with responsibility of ensuring that herbal practitioners adhere to strict guidelines in their day to day operation and in the quality of products produced for human consumption. No herbal medicine product in Nigeria is allowed into the market without NAFDAC registration number as a stamp that makes it safe for human consumption. This is a clear evidence of art and culture in creative intersection with science, health and technology.

PROMOTION AND MARKETING OF HERBAL PRODUCTS

Apart from the sales of herbal medicinal products in approved centres, government through her various agencies have embarked on aggressive awareness creation on the importance of herbal medicinal products to her citizens and what Nigeria stands to gain in terms of capital flow into the country through export. The Presidential Initiative Committee on the promotion, development and commercialization of Nigerian Herbal/Medicinal products has been at the forefront in this area, supported by agencies such as the Nigerian Export Promotion Control, the National Council for Arts and Culture, the Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission and State governments, who engage in collaborative efforts and organize trade fairs, herbal medicine fairs, workshops, seminars and conferences at regular interval to bring to the knowledge of all and sundry the importance of herbal medicine.

ESTABLISHMENT OF HERBAL GARDENS

With the changes in global climatic conditions and the obvious attendant dangers it portends for man and plants, coupled with the outcry by practitioners that it is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain some plants used in herbal medicine, the government embarked on the establishment of gardens called National Herbal Gardens in different geographical belts in the country.

These gardens are designed to serve as facilities for the cultivation, preservation and propagation of various indigenous plant species which are not ordinarily taken into account in prevailing afforestation programme or threatened by the extinction through agents of weathering. These Herbal Gardens, apart from being designed to be conservatories for endangered species of herbs, shrubs and trees of medicinal,

economic and social values among the people of Nigeria, now meet the following objectives:-

- i) Serve as a reference point for researchers and scholars in culture, Community Medicine, Pharmacy, Botany, Agriculture, Ecology, Food Science, Pharmacology, Environmental Studies, Tourism, etc.
- ii) Provide employment for Nigerians interested in herbal medicinal plants cultivation and propagation.
- iii) Preservation and conservation of endangered plants running the risk of extinction especially those that have cultural, medicinal, economical and environmental significance, and useful to Nigeria's vibrant population.
- iv) Serve as an avenue for encouraging recreation and boosting tourism, especially as it relates to show casing some of the country's indigenous plants, shrubs, herbs and trees peculiar to ecological and cultural belts, students on excursion visit to the gardens as well as, bird watchers, who by every inch are professionals.
- v) The gardens serve as a potent resource base for the practice of herbal medicare and the entire health delivery sector as well as for crafts and textile materials, perfumery, foods and beverages.
- vi) Provision of seedlings of preserved herbs and shrubs for further cultivation, multiplication and propagation.
- vii) Support the on-going world-wide crusade for environmental protection and development.
- viii) Support the on-going global crusade for authentic, decent and affordable health delivery care system for children, women and youth anchored on effective and sustainable herbal medicine practice.

The National Council for Arts and Culture pioneered the establishment of Herbal Garden about one and half decades ago in Nigeria, and now enjoys the support of relevant agencies in agriculture, health and environment because of the tremendous revenue accruing from it to the country. This intervention by the Council has actually set a pace that others are copying in the sub-region. Species of endangered medicinal plants are willingly donated to the gardens for preservation by practitioners and other partners. These partners identify with the gardens with deep sense of physiological and psychological attachments. The creative intersections strengthens the bonding among practitioners who feel carried along and see the programme as part of their life investments and a legacy they would bequeath to society.

At present the bill for an Act to establish the Traditional/Herbal Medicine Council of Nigeria is before the National Assembly. In Nigeria, the accessibility and affordability of herbal medicinal products has continued to create growing number of users. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) more than 60% of children with high fever in Nigeria were treated at home with herbal medicines. Thus, Traditional/Herbal Medicine continues to contribute significantly to the country's health care delivery system. Another benefit of traditional medicine is its acknowledged commercial success. World Health Organization (WHO) informs us that the global market for herbal/traditional

alternative and complementary medicine is US \$60 Billion per annum. Most of this market is dominated by exports from China, India, the two Koreans and other Asian countries. For now, Nigeria participation in the global business is negligible and she desires to make a positive impact, hence she robustly engaged in creative intersections.

Above is a vivid illustration of arts and culture engaging in positive and meaningful collaboration/interplay with other disciplines and sectors to bring about development and the upliftment of humanity.

NOLLYWOOD / NCAC INTERVENTION

Background:

The history and the evolution of Home video cannot be told without the mention and involvement of the Yoruba travelling theatre practitioners like the late Alade Muyideen, Aromire and the efforts of people like Alhaji Yekini Oyedele and members of the Awada Kerikeri Organization. It is on record that the Yoruba Travelling Theatre Artists began making home video films as far back as early 80s, a period that was generally referred to as difficult for the Nigerian Artistes. To remain in business, the practitioners decided that the bail out from the very expensive celluloid film was to embrace the video which was considered simple, and a cost-effective way of producing audio-visual materials for projection to an audience.

However, what is today the acclaimed success story of the Nigerian Homevideo - Nollywood Industry was as a result of creative intersections initiated by creative and dynamic Nigerians like Kenneth Nnebue who championed the home video production and market to the larger audience through the retail sales of video. It was he who truly inspired and aroused interest in the production of video film after the successful debut of a two-part Ibo language movie titled "Living in Bondage" which he funded. The success of "Living in Bondage" could be attributed to creative ingenuity of the practitioner, the acceptance of innovation by the public coupled with creative previews and reviews from the mass media and support of new technology.

Prior to this era, nobody gave the home video a chance as the context and content of productions came under heavy attack and was referred to with all sorts of names: "horror of amateurish and scary portrayal of rituals", 'unwindy ending' and 'untidy plots' etc.

Intervention

However, faced with numerous setbacks and a flash in the pan success, stakeholders in the movie industry and indeed the artistes themselves gradually started to consult and began taking the business of home video/movie making more serious. *What did they do?* They started forming Associations such as:

- The Actors Guild of Nigeria
- Screen Writers Guild of Nigeria
- National Association of Nigerian Theatre Arts Practitioners
- Society of Nigerian Theatre Artists
- Nigerian Guild of Directors.

Through these professional associations, artistes are able to initiate creative intersections which result in meaningful collaborations with financial institutions, non-governmental organizations, government agencies at all levels, civil society groups, marketers, mass mobilization and advocacy groups, etc for the advancement and betterment of society. Among these creative intersections was the intervention that involved the Government through an Agency like the National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC), a parastatal in the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and National Orientation, charged with the responsibility of preserving, promoting and protecting the living arts and culture of Nigeria. Encouraged to form professional bodies, government started working with such associations and went further to strengthen the industry by creating a regulatory agency known as the Nigerian Video and Censorship Board to ensure that acceptable standards are maintained.

Taking full cognizance of the fact that the Nigerian video and film industry directly impacts on society, especially the vulnerable youths, the government through one of its agencies, the National Council for Arts and Culture decided to intervene in the industry through rewards for creativity and excellence, capacity building for stakeholders, aids and assistance, consultations and advocacy, and regular institutional support and creating an enabling environment for co-living and bonding among practitioners.

The interventionist scheme began in 1997, when the Council devoted that year's National Merit Award for Arts and Culture to the Home Video Industry. Various awards in acting, directing, production and culture orientated film in indigenous languages were honoured and rewarded. The objective was to stimulate growth in the home video business, improve standards and encourage best practices, as well as ensuring that the living standard of practitioners improve tremendously.

In 2009, also the thrust of the NCAC Honours Lecture titled: "The Nigerian Home Video Industry" Living in the bondage of wealth Creation, delivered by Dr. Hyginus Ekwuazi of University of Ibadan, and a one-time Managing Director of Nigerian Film Corporation was on the impact and constraints of Nollywood. The consensus of the workshop was the need for systemic mediation towards correcting some flaws in the industry as well as, boosting capacity delivery and technical finishing of Nollywood production. It was agreed that the industry was a large reservoir for employment, job and wealth creation that need to be well harnessed and propelled to excel as a global player.

In 2010, consequent on the success of the honour's lecture, the National Council for Arts and Culture entered into partnership with a private Company known as Nollywood Travel Market Ltd in the area of capacity building and production of what can now be called a model film.

The aim of this intervention was among others:

- engaging practitioners in refresher courses by way of improving performance and delivery
- undertake periodic training workshop to upgrade technical competence

- equip relevant personnel with appropriate cultural impetus in characterization, context and role interpretation and
- improve overall package of Nollywood production.

The workshop covered cinematography, editing, costume and make up and scripting with the production of three (3) films at end of the collaboration.

In a nutshell, the workshop was geared towards the fulfillment of deploying cultural resources to promote national image and socio-economic growth as against the prevailing situation where the industry is driven by marketers and traders with profit making as their sole motive or attraction to the industry. The situation is set to improve and change for the better with Nollywood as one of the priority areas the government's Transformation Agenda.

Through these synergies and creative intersections the government has been able to re-position the business of film-making to become an effective platform for contributing significantly to creativity, wealth generation, job creation, international diplomacy, poverty reduction and also a medium through which the nation and artistes can now speak, have a voice and be heard in our quest to develop and make meaningful impact in the global arena.

Finally, I wish to state that the effective cohesion and fusion, interplay of creative intersections had been majorly responsible for the success Nollywood has achieved so far, thus making it a major tool for cultural integration and cooperation where its products had reached globally.

CONCLUSION:

Creative intersections in arts and culture with other disciplines and sectors are very key for progress and development. With the world becoming a global village, interactions with other sectors is imperative to avoid stagnation and decay.

Thank you.