



A Foundation Enlarging its Coasts

Beginning from July and for several months in 2003 and after, the people of Kwara State became beneficiaries of interventions and endowments from the Kwara Wellbeing Trust (KWT), working under the auspices of the Wellbeing Foundation. Over the last 18 months many have borne witness to the effects of the activities of the foundation in the state and how the foundation has relentlessly tried to bring relief to the less privileged.

The Wellbeing Foundation believes in adding value to the communities in which it operates. It works to support the government of Kwara State through the Kwara Wellbeing Trust, seeing its role as one which helps to create and enabling environment where people, especially women and children can live in peace and prosperity.

Perhaps this explains why the KWT intervention began with the renovation of the Children's Specialist Hospital in Centre Igboro, Ilorin. The foundation has undertaken an extensive renovation of the hospital, transforming the place to a modern, state-of-the-art health institution. This project has in no small way improved health care to children in Kwara State and the KWT sees this as only the beginning. They have also put in place structures to enable the hospital establish a maintenance culture.

It is for the same reason that the KWT recently donated neonatal emergency monitoring and resuscitation aid to the University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital. Some of them include apparatuses for premature infants like the neonatal resuscitator and pulse oximeters imported by the KWT and donated to the hospital. Already there has been a successful treatment of triplets. The KWT renders further assistance with drugs, baby food, and so on to such parents who have multiple children like twins or triplets.

Although much of the Wellbeing Foundation programs have been health based, they are not restricted to health alone. In 2004, the foundation instituted a monthly financial support for indigent children needing help for one thing or the other. The Foundation has also carried out programs in education, social enterprise, HIV AIDS and even sports.

Conscious of the increasing responsibility being imposed on the foundation by the people's growing needs and the stifling nature of today's economy, the Wellbeing Foundation has since inception been seeking to collaborate with government bodies, donor organizations and the corporate world in carrying out its programs. The foundation has recently been in talks with US-based developmental organizations: Village Earth (VE) and the Cosmopolitan Allied Health Institute (CAHI). In their bid to bring sustainable development to Kwara State, these talks, which have lasted for almost six months, will be consolidated with the visit of the two organisations from the 26 th of February to 5 th of March 2005.

Village Earth is a world renowned consortium for village-based development and an arm of the Colorado State University, USA. They will be working with the Cosmopolitan Allied Health Institute (CAHI) also based in the US, and the Wellbeing Foundation to bring steady but sure footed development to villages in Nigeria.

A statement issued by the Wellbeing Foundation last week indicated that the one-week long visit, which will take the delegation to several rural communities in the country, resulted out of the search by the Founding Trustee of The Wellbeing Foundation, Her Excellency Mrs. Toyin Saraki to pioneer a systematic, well organised development plan for the villages.

The statement explained that "Mrs. Saraki holds a view similar to that of the two other parties that the development of people must originate from the rural areas where majority of the peoples in the country reside"

The visit which will take the delegation round the three senatorial districts of Kwara State is to enhance the growth of rural communities in the state and the country as a whole in the areas of basic health care delivery, safe motherhood, creating opportunities for self-employment and ensuring that children have more quality life through education and health care delivery.

The organizations have a philosophy of participatory involvement by all stakeholders in the village. According to them, this is vital in creating a positive development climate. The statement quoted one of the co-founders of Village Earth saying, "Participation is the key to human motivation. Villagers must have the opportunity to participate and have ownership in the decisions affecting their lives."

The future appears bright for the two groups and more importantly for the people they are making an effort to help. Both the Wellbeing Foundation and the US-based organizations have expressed enthusiasm at how much the collaboration between the two groups will bring a lasting transformation to the lives of the people and also enhance their profile as organizations that care.