

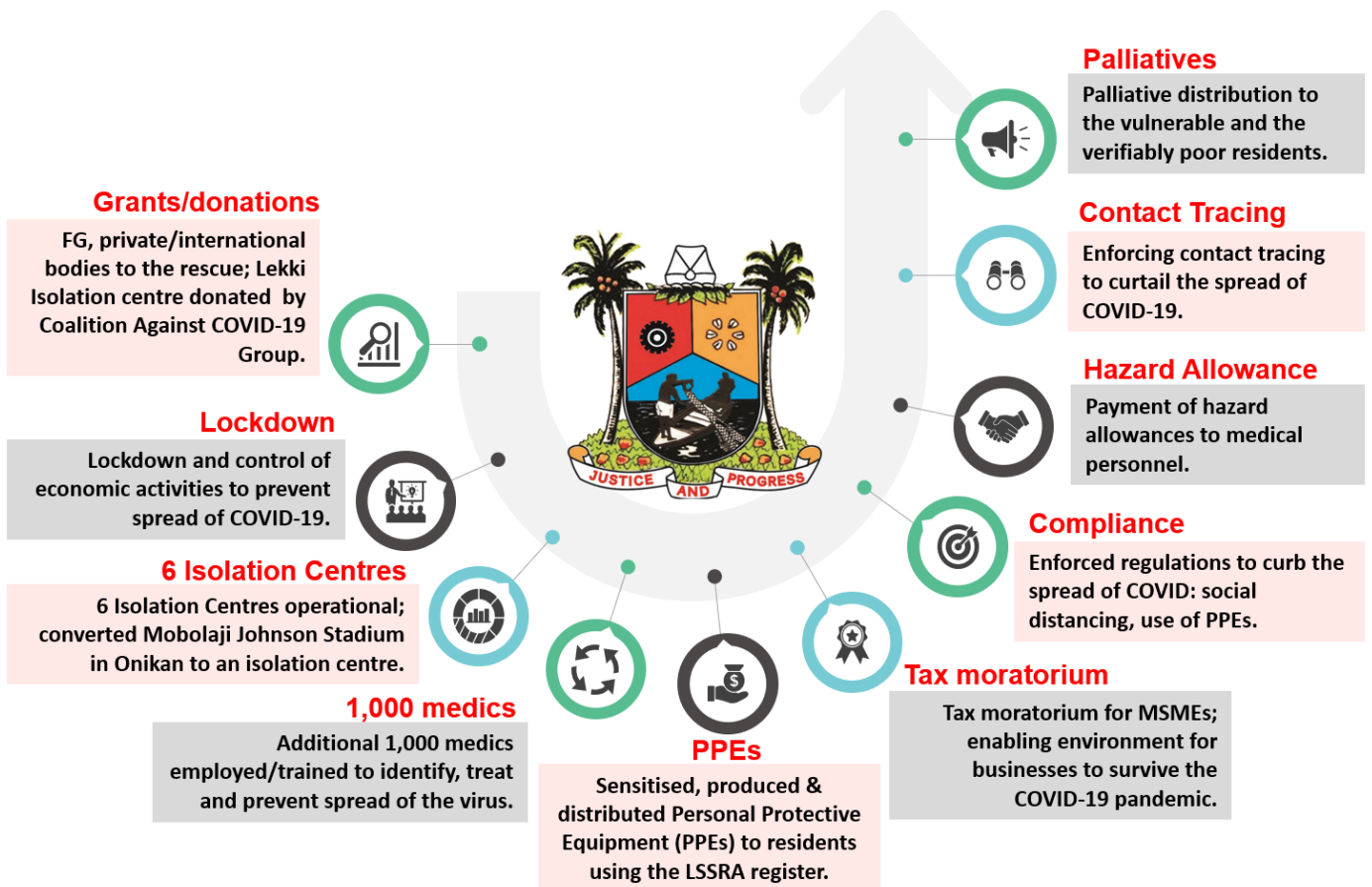
THE MAKING OF AN AMAZON

WOMEN OF CHANGE SERIES



January 2020 in Lagos started out like every other year. Big businesses lined up, annual calendars and individuals shared goals for the next 12 months. However, few weeks into the year, everything changed, and Lagos, along with the rest of the world was thrust into uncertainty and panic. By April, businesses had shut down, oil prices plummeted, and most importantly, people were instilled with fear from the looming challenges ahead. In the middle of this global tension, at the heart of Nigeria's economic capital, a team led by the assertive and resourceful Mrs. Adenike Bamgbola was crafting a sustainable pathway to recovery for a resilient city, and the rest of the state. As the Head of the Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU) in Lagos State, the responsibility of providing an economic solution during this pandemic rested squarely on Mrs. Bamgbola's shoulders. Within a short time, she and her team delivered an actionable plan that covered key areas of interest. Mrs. Bamgbola and her team presented a comprehensive economic response plan for COVID-19 at the beginning of the pandemic with recommendations that have provided palliative solutions for those living in the epicentre of the pandemic in Nigeria. The implementation of their ideas has impacted over 30,000 Lagosians directly and many more indirectly.

Lagos State Economic Response Plan



According to Mrs Bamgbola, “The EIU came up with a presentation on pre/post COVID-19 with the understanding that, if the price of oil is fluctuating, Lagos should be thinking ahead and planning on how to ameliorate the effects on the economy. EIU advised that for recurrent expenditure, the state should stop all training, stop all travels, expend only on critical programmes that can reduce suffering, like embarking on short term capital projects whilst focusing on construction, diversify the agricultural sector, organise relief packages for SMEs and young entrepreneurs, expanding the manufacturing sector through its value chain, and massively support wealth creation programmes. More so, focus should be on how to help the poorest of the poor.”

The presentation created a clear picture of the attendant economic impact of COVID-19 and triggered further meetings with key budget actors; from the Commissioner of Economic Planning and Budget, Finance, Debt Management Office, Ministry of Establishment & Training to Lagos Inland Revenue Service. A huge part of the plan implemented in Lagos during this pandemic is the result of Mrs Bamgbola's contribution to the proactive team decision-making, as a leader and manager. Mrs. Bamgbola shared some of the highlights of the economic plan and says, "as a state, we advised that Government needs to continue with stimulus packages since lots of people in Lagos State depend on daily income. We need to support them as they stay at home.

With support from the World Bank's National Social Safety-Net Programme, State Operation Coordinating Unit (SOCU), the state was able to identify those who critically needed the state's stimulus package. The Ministry of Economic Planning and Budget led the push for more support, as the pandemic shut down economic activities in the state. Consequently, details of over 30,000 residents were captured under the Lagos SOCU register and Lagos State Residents Registration Agency (LASRRA). Identified families received a meal per day, courtesy of Lagos State Government, donors and foundations.

As a state that aggressively supports SMEs, the response plan included a tax holiday to ease the burden on growing businesses during and after this period. The Commissioner for Finance announced 3 months tax holiday for SMEs and people who got loans from office of Wealth creation. They are also coming up with spontaneous relief measures. People in the informal sector are required to pay tax of only N2,500 per annum. The comprehensive plan also covered other key areas during this pandemic, especially in the health sector. Beyond the direct economic support, Mrs. Bamgbola, being a member of the Primary Health Care Board PHCB was privileged to be included in the committee saddled with the responsibility to monitor the level of preparedness for COVID-19 in Primary Health Centres. Members of this board were tasked with training health workers on how to manage COVID-19. They also helped to spread awareness of precautionary measures.

Next, the entire plan had to be tracked and monitored to assess the effectiveness of these measures and judicious use of resources. The state created an independent group to carry out this task. Every activity carried out as part of the response plan must be delivered, documented and reported. Interestingly, the proposed solutions reflected the pillars of the state Development plan, which dove-tails to become the THEMES Agenda of the present administration of Lagos State. THEMES represent Traffic Management and Transportation; Health and Environment; Education and Technology; Making Lagos a 21st Century state; Security and Governance. The solutions also reflected the sub-pillars of the state plans, such as cross-cutting issues, duplication of duties, gender and social inclusion. Mrs Bamgbola continues, "The state ensured that the standard of living of an average woman is protected in the economic palliatives. For preparation and distribution of stimulus packages, both women and men, subject to terms of contracts and job descriptions, were highly involved in inspecting, packaging, validating and monitoring. Most of the 600 vendors in Lagos are women and there are other women in the community to support."

The objective of the plan was to manage the economy against the impact of COVID-19. However, there is the post-COVID-19 plan which should help the state to recover from the effects of COVID-19. While the suggestions from her economic response plan are being executed, Lagos State embarked on a three-pronged approach to disaster recovery. "Going forward" Mrs Bamgbola continues, "the EIU is working on the effects of COVID-19 on the Lagos economy, the business environment and the psychology of the people in the process of reviving the economy post-COVID. The State is resolute in maintaining a stronger response strategy to the pandemic, restarting the economy and reimagining the way Lagos State works. The Commissioners for MEPB, Finance, Agriculture, Environment, Accountant General and Lagos Internal Revenue Service (LIRS) are involved. They all need to work in synergy as a state, identify areas of synergy, and come up with a Disaster Recovery strategy." Lagos State has set the pace for COVID-19 response in the country, with many other states taking the cue from the Economic

Capital's response. The lives saved and families supported during this period would go a long way to build a level of trust in the effectiveness of public service in the state. Responding to the pandemic did not come without challenges. First, the centralized data bank to identify the vulnerable and the poor who should rightly benefit from the palliative measures is limited. Despite the sensitization by Lagos State Governments, most residents have still not filled in their details. This makes it difficult for the palliative measures to reach the expected population. Other reasons residents are left out of the palliative measures include inadequate planning as most agencies were caught unawares in the pandemic, leading to improper organization and coordination.

The second challenge is that residents experience extortion by security personnel for one reason or another. More so, social unrest and crime is an effect of the economic challenges caused by the lockdown. In addition, many residents are not compliant with the restriction and social distancing orders and the use of personal protective equipment. State agencies still have the opportunity to support the ongoing social register collation by SOCU to ensure data accuracy; support establishment of a centralised data bank to inform planning, budgeting and wholistic governance; encourage residents to register with LASRA; sustain government policies and strengthen weak institutions; ensure that justice for all is upheld; bridge inequality by providing basic amenities and release budgets only for crucial expenditures.

Considering that there is not yet an approved vaccine for COVID-19 and there is danger of a second wave if a remedy is not found, Lagos State is looking towards a continual update and upgraded functionality of the social/LASRA register in collaboration with the State Bureau of Statistics, maintenance of isolation centres and motivation of health workers, continuous training and retraining of medical personnel to combat the disease, and a more robust urban planning and regeneration in the long term. All these would not be possible without the invaluable contribution of Mrs Adenike Bamgbola. Her growing success story is the fruit of dedication, commitment and self-development through opportunities like the Women in Governance initiative.



My experience with the Women in Governance forum has been 'LIFE TRANSFORMING'. Prior to WinG, I have been involved in reforms, technical issues, training, communicating critical decisions/recommendations. However, after the training I began complementing managerial functions with leaderships skills. Since I started my career in 2002, there is no other programme like this because it is hands-on, and it involves a lot of hand-holding.

Mrs. Adenike Bamgbola



She narrates how the lessons from the WinG initiative filtered through her work relations and effectiveness, as Head of the EIU. "After the training, I began complementing managerial functions with leaderships skills, especially through Emotional Intelligence. I now balance technical expertise with emotional intelligence – patience, empathy, listening to their challenges, getting creative options from, and mentoring EIU officers. I maintain an open office policy, and try to be a reliable leader and manager, a friend and a team member.

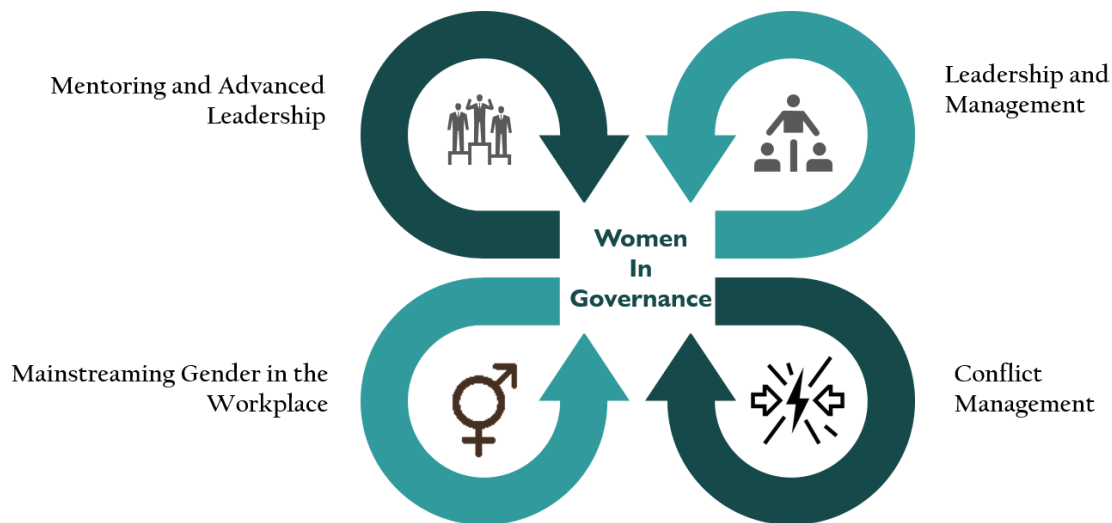
For the (EIU) officers, the first two weeks we had just motivational talks, no work at all. I talked to them about having the growth mindset, expressed my belief in them, assured them that we could achieve a lot together. Now we meet regularly to brainstorm and seek solutions together on burning issues of the state. Gradually their confidence has been built, they are more assertive and more pragmatic. That is why I will continue to say your program will always be a life transforming experience for me. I started my career in Lagos State civil service in 2002 and there has never been any program like this program.

The Journey

Mrs Clara Adenike Bamgbola joined the Public Service in 2002 and was posted to the Lagos State Ministry of Economic Planning and Budget, where she worked for 16 years, before being deployed to the Ministry of Health for 18 months and redeployed back to MEPB where she now heads the Economic Intelligence Unit. Her role in Public Service and previous collaboration with development partners afforded her the opportunity to participate in the PERL Women in Governance initiative. Her next assignment saw her move to the Ministry of Health as the Head of the Health Sector Planning Unit, where she was able to put what she had learnt from Community of Practice (CoP) into practice. At this new post, she made significant changes to their budget processes and realised ground-breaking success. She pinpoints this as a life transforming factor in her career. Mrs Bamgbola is now an Assistant Director, and currently the Head of Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU) in Lagos State Government. She is a proven technocrat in the planning and budgeting domain of public service and is a dominant force behind some of the notable reforms in Policy & Strategy, Monitoring and Evaluation that are transforming Lagos State. Being able to refine her skills set through learning events, Mrs Bamgbola explains that she has become more assertive and confident in different areas including conflict management. Her tactful approach to conflict management, which favours collaboration and compromise rather than competition is a refreshing approach that has bore considerable results.



The Women In Governance Initiative



The Women in Governance Community of Practice (CoP) was officially launched on the 28th of February 2018, just ahead of International Women's Day with 15 members and the theme: "Stronger Together." By March 2020, its membership had grown to 52. Since the launch of the Community of Practice, there have been three training programmes to improve the overall performance of these change agents to deliver better services. A training on Gender Mainstreaming in the Workplace was conducted for women in leadership positions in the Southwest in September 2019. The training focused on a broader understanding and implementation of equity and inclusion in the workplace, emphasising gender-based budgeting as a learning from Osun state, following implementation of the State Gender Equity and Social Inclusion Policy, which PERL helped to develop. The first training, held in February 2018, provided AWARD certified leadership and management skills building through well-defined modules and team building activities. In September 2018, there was a second Community of Practice gathering for a one-day conflict management training. In January 2019, the expanded Community of Practice met again for an AWARD certified four-day advanced leadership and mentoring training, following the identification of the women to understand and deploy mentoring skills within their organisations to optimise performance.

Contact Details

-  10 Bobo Street Maitama Abuja, Nigeria
-  info@arc.perlnigeria.net
-  Find us on Facebook
www.facebook.com/perlnigeria
-  www.perlnigeria.net

