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JAM'IYYAR MATAN AREWA, NORTHERN WOMEN LAUD JULIUS BERGER NIGERIA PLC FOR CSR INTERVENTION

The pioneer and a foremost women Non-Governmental Organisation in Northern Nigeria, Jam'iyyar Matan Arewa (JMA), has commended the country's leading construction company, Julius Berger Nigeria Plc, as “*a most responsible company with a highly functional, productive and commendable Corporate Social Responsibility culture...worthy of emulation by others*”.

The President of *Jam'iyyar Matan Arewa (JMA)*, Hajiya Rabi Musa Saulawa, made the remarks recently in Kaduna at the handing over ceremony of the renovated buildings at the *Jam'iyyar Matan Arewa (JMA)* Orphanage and Premier School premises. The renovation works were undertaken by Julius Berger as part of the company's Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives to assist the development of its host communities along the geo-strategic Abuja-Kaduna-Zaria-Kano Road construction project.

Hajiya Rabi Musa Saulawa, who traced the history of *Jam'iyyar Matan Arewa* to Nigeria's First Republic, said it was founded in 1963. According to her, on the 1st of December 1964, Jam'iyyar Matan Arewa opened the orphanage in Kaduna with take-off property and a £500 take-off donation by the then Premier of Northern Nigeria and Sardauna of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello. Hajiya Rabi intimated that since its founding till date, over 3,000 orphans have successfully passed through *Jam'iyyar Matan Arewa* Orphanage and its schools.

According to her, many of the children who passed through the institution are now graduates of universities and polytechnics. Two of such students are graduates of the Nigerian Defense Academy (NDA) and one attended Nigerian Aviation School Zaria and is now a pilot, while several others are now Police Officers.

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Directors: Mr. M. Sunmonu, CON, Chairman • Mr. G. Marks, Vice Chairman (German) • Engr. Dr. L. Richter, Managing Director (German)

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“However, the JMA Orphanage, its office accommodation, and school buildings overtime fell into a deplorable state of dilapidation due to paucity of funds - as the institution was dependent on the donations of kind-hearted individuals and the little income that comes from the schools, which was grossly inadequate to carry out any major renovations or successfully run the institution”, Hajiya Rabi said. Thus, she heartily thanked Julius Berger for its very meaningful CSR intervention that has assisted in the renovation of the institution’s buildings.

Alhaji Zubairu Ibrahim Bayi, Executive Director Administration of Julius Berger Nigeria Plc, who represented the Managing Director of the company Engr. Dr. Lars Richter, and led the company’s delegation to the event, offered the sincere regards and good wishes of the MD for a happy new year to all guests present at the ceremony.

Bayi, who grew up in Kaduna said, “...on a very personal and nostalgic note, I equally feel a deep sense of happy homecoming standing before you at this event in Kaduna. While I am here representing our MD, Dr. Richter, and officially speaking for Julius Berger Nigeria Plc, kindly allow me to say it feels good to be home in your midst”.

According to Bayi, since the inception of the Abuja-Kano Road (AKR) project, Julius Berger has proactively collaborated with and positively touched lives in its host communities along the project corridor, as the company’s standing culture of Corporate Social Responsibility.

“We have achieved our Corporate Social Responsibility objectives by providing either new or making worthy improvement to existing utilities or amenities. Our CSR activities ranged from drilling of boreholes to supply water to our host communities, construction or renovation of classrooms, and donation of textbooks and other teaching, learning and sporting aids to schools”, Bayi said.

Other Julius Berger CSR contributions, according to Bayi include hospital donations and related needs such as ambulance provision, beds, mattresses, personal protective equipment (PPP); emergency food supply through the Julius Berger *Food for our Communities* Campaign; and insecticide treated mosquito nets (ITN) to protect pregnant women and children from the deadly scourge of malaria.

Continuing, Bayi said the distribution of food palliatives was also extended to orphanages to mark the 2022 International Day of Charity, and most recently to communities affected by the sad and destructive flood incidences. All along the Abuja-Kaduna-Zaria-Kano Road corridor, several communities, he said, have benefited from Julius Berger's Corporate Social Responsibility activities. He further informed the gathering that, significantly, as a deliberate policy targeted at empowering its host communities, Julius Berger ensured that local contractors were used in executing all the projects and procurement of required items either in the form of construction materials or commodities. In his words, *"the selection of the beneficiaries of these projects were also tactically done on the basis of fair spread of community empowerment"*.

According to him, most distributed Julius Berger CSR items, especially food items, were sourced from host communities. *"This impacted positively on the economy of these communities through job creation and enhancement of local purchasing power....On the average, over 500 direct and indirect jobs were created from the execution of these Julius Berger Corporate Social Responsibility projects"*, said Bayi.

Alhaji Bayi informed the gathering that it was in line with Julius Berger's proactive CSR policy that the Jam'iyyar Matan Arewa (JMA) Orphanage, Kaduna, which is within a host community of the Abuja-Kano Road (AKR) Project, was identified as a suitable institution that should benefit from Julius Berger's Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives. This led to the decision to embark on the rehabilitation works at the orphanage, which was in dire need of restoration.

While commending the President of Jam'iyyar Matan Arewa (JMA) and her team for their commitment to revamp the Orphanage and its schools, Alhaji Bayi added that the main drive of Julius Berger's intervention was to see a restoration of the historical monument, to reflect the founders' vision and their lasting commitment to society's well-being.

Julius Berger, thereafter, officially handed over the renovated Jam'iyyar Matan Arewa (JMA) Orphanage to its President, Hajiya Rabi Saulawa and its Board of Trustees. As a show of appreciation, Julius Berger was handed an award for *"Outstanding and Compassionate Organization with a Self-recommending Corporate Social Responsibility Culture"* by the organisation's Board of Trustees.

At the end of the ceremony, senior officials of Julius Berger Nigeria Plc, who were present at the event, including the Executive Director of Administration, Alhaji Zubairu Ibrahim Bayi, the Director of the ongoing Abuja-Kaduna-Zaria-Kano Road construction works, Engr. Benjamin Bott, and the Project's Commercial Manager, Mr. Ralf Brendicke, were decorated by members of JMA with their organisation's colourful toga that bears the historic Dagin Arewa (the Arewa Knot) emblem.

Other important dignitaries, who attended the event in Kaduna, included the Hakimi Kawu, Alhaji Jibrin Mohammed Magaji, representing His Royal Highness, the Emir of Zazzau, Alh. Suleiman (Turakin Zazzau); the ageless Kaduna Matriarch, Hajiya Hon. Saudatu Sani; former Chief of Staff to Governor Nasir El-Rufai and Senatorial aspirant, Kaduna Central, Alhaji Mohammed Sanni Datijo; Hon. Shehu Balarabe; Alhaji Sani Garba; HRH Hajiya Aishatu Amina Dantoro (nee Yahaya Gusau); Mrs. Salomi Gwamna Kennedy, representing the Hon. Commissioner for Education Kaduna State, Hajiya Halima Lawal; and Alhaji Balomi, the Executive Chairman of Kaduna North Local Government Area, amongst many others.

Jam'iyyar Matan Arewa (JMA) is an umbrella social and non-political organisation of women in Northern Nigeria from all backgrounds regardless of their religion, tribe and social status, leading and driving the process of women empowerment in Northern Nigeria.