

PEOPLE
PLACES
POSSIBILITIES

A
ZAMFARA
MAGAZINE

HORIZON

ZAMFARA

2026 EDITION

A LAND OF GREATER POSSIBILITIES

HISTORY
CULTURE
PEOPLE
DEVELOPMENT
OPPORTUNITY



A BOLDER
TOMORROW
INVEST · INNOVATE · BUILD

BEYOND THE HEADLINES

The Zamfara Story: Our Past, Our Present, Our Future

There is more to Zamfara than the stories that have dominated its headlines. Beyond the challenges of insecurity, economic hardship and years of unrealised potential lies a land of remarkable history, enduring culture, abundant resources and people whose aspirations have never been defined by their circumstances.

Once home to thriving industries, flourishing agricultural commerce and communities connected by trade, Zamfara has experienced both the promise of prosperity and the painful consequences of decline. Yet its story remains unfinished.

Horizon Zamfara was born from a desire to tell that story differently. Not to erase the difficulties of yesterday, nor to overlook the challenges of today, but to document the journey of a state whose identity extends far beyond its struggles.

Through history, architecture, infrastructure, governance, enterprise and the voices of its people, this publication explores the foundations upon which Zamfara was built, the changes reshaping its present and the possibilities awaiting its future.

For there is a Zamfara worth remembering, a Zamfara worth rebuilding, and above all, a Zamfara worth believing in.

This is our history. This is our journey. This is Horizon Zamfara.

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THE LAND BEFORE THE STATE

Before Zamfara became a state, it was already a land of peoples, settlements and histories.

Across the wide savannahs of what is now north-western Nigeria lay a landscape of open plains, cultivable earth, rocky formations and old communities whose histories long preceded the boundaries drawn around modern Zamfara. The geography helped shape life here: vast stretches of arable land supported cultivation and grazing, while settlements grew around water, trade routes, farmland and centres of traditional authority.

What we now call Zamfara was not born in 1996. The creation of the state brought together territories whose identities had been forming for centuries. Gusau, Kaura Namoda, Zurmi, Maru, Bungudu, Anka, Talata Mafara and other historic settlements each carried their own local histories and institutions. Emirates and traditional authorities became important custodians of community, custom and continuity, surviving political transformations from the pre-colonial period through colonial administration and into modern Nigeria.

The people were equally important to the character of the land. Hausa communities, Fulani pastoral and settled communities, and older populations associated with Hausa traditional religion—often described historically as Maguzawa—formed part of the wider human landscape of the region. Farming, pastoralism, markets, migration, intermarriage, religion and centuries of interaction gradually knitted different communities into the social fabric found across Zamfara today.

And the land itself provided some of its most enduring symbols.



Rising dramatically from the plains is the enormous rock formation at Kwatarkwashi. It is more than a spectacular piece of geography. Generations have looked upon the rock and attached stories to it. Oral traditions, local legends and popular tales have surrounded Kwatarkwashi—stories that blur the boundary between remembered history, folklore and imagination. Such accounts should not always be read as literal history; their importance lies partly in what they reveal about how communities understood the landscape around them.

The rock has watched settlements expand beneath it, rulers come and go and roads cut across a landscape once traversed very differently. Its physical permanence gives it an almost timeless quality: human boundaries change, administrations are created and governments disappear, but the rock remains.

Beyond Kwatarkwashi stretches another form of wealth: the land itself. Zamfara possesses extensive agricultural terrain, with broad cultivated and cultivable areas that have supported generations of farmers. Millet, sorghum, maize, groundnuts, cotton and other crops became part of the relationship between people and soil, while the open savannah also supported livestock and pastoral movement.

AN AGRARIAN ECONOMY

THE WEALTH THAT GREW FROM THE LAND

Long before oil, the territory that today forms Zamfara was part of a vast agricultural landscape that helped build Nigeria.

For centuries, the savannahs of present-day Zamfara supported farming, livestock rearing and thriving rural markets. Communities cultivated millet, sorghum, maize and other food crops for local consumption, while cotton, groundnuts and livestock products increasingly became commercial commodities. These activities sustained households, created trade networks and connected the region to wider markets across the Sokoto Caliphate and beyond.

This agrarian economy did not begin with colonial rule. It was built on the knowledge, labour and resilience of local communities. But with the expansion of British colonial interests in the early twentieth century, the commercial potential of Northern Nigeria's agriculture became much more visible — and valuable.

THE BRITISH SAW THE VALUE

When Britain consolidated control over Northern Nigeria, it recognised the economic importance of the region's agricultural production. Cotton was seen as a strategic crop for the British textile industry, especially in Lancashire. The British Cotton Growing Association actively promoted cotton cultivation, introduced improved varieties and lobbied for transport infrastructure to move produce from the interior to the coast.

Groundnuts also proved highly profitable, and as markets expanded, British authorities increasingly organised trade, taxation and transport around these crops.

MAIZE

A key food crop across the savannahs, sustaining households and local markets.

COTTON

Widely cultivated in Northern Nigeria and intended for the British textile industry. The region's cotton was part of the wider effort to supply raw materials to factories in Britain.

MORE THAN CROPS

Agriculture in the region was not limited to crops. Livestock rearing supported a major trade in hides and skins, which were in high demand internationally, especially during the world wars. Local processing and traditional industries — from dyeing and weaving to leather work — added further value to agricultural production.

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR CHANGE

As production and trade expanded, there was a growing need to move large volumes of agricultural goods. This demand played a major role in the development of roads and railways in Northern Nigeria. Transport networks were built to carry the produce of the land to markets and ports, connecting the farms of the interior to national and international trade.

Before the railway came the produce it was built to carry. Before the factories came the raw materials they were built to process. The story of Zamfara's development therefore begins with the land — and the people who made it productive.

GROUNDNUTS

One of the most important cash crops in Northern Nigeria, groundnuts became a major export commodity after the expansion of transport networks, contributing significantly to the regional and national economy.

HIDES & SKINS

Livestock products, including hides and skins, were valuable exports, with demand increasing during the world wars and beyond.



COTTON, GROUNDNUTS, HIDES & SKINS

The commodities that drew colonial infrastructure inland

How the harvests of Northern Nigeria became the commodities that connected its people, markets and colonial economy to the wider world.

Long before the discovery of petroleum reshaped Nigeria's economic fortunes, another kind of wealth had already been flowing from its northern plains. It was not buried beneath the earth, nor extracted from deep wells. It grew beneath the sun, flourished with the rains and passed through the hands of farmers, herders, craftsmen and merchants whose labour sustained generations.

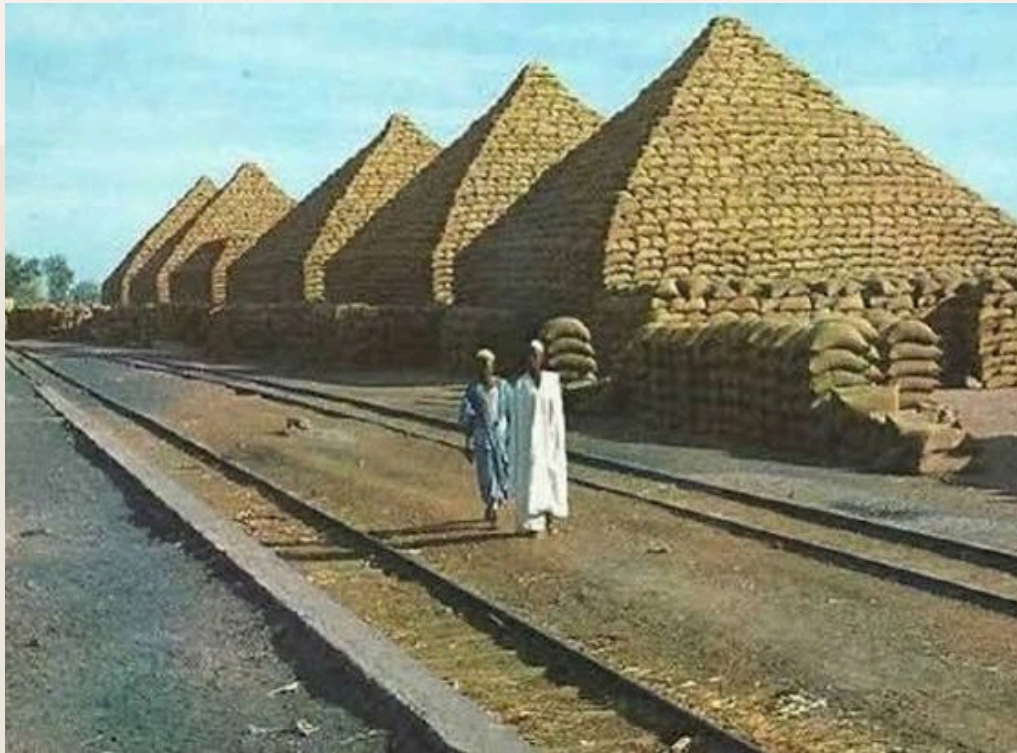
Across the territories that would eventually become Zamfara State, agriculture was more than an occupation. It was a way of life, an inheritance passed from one generation to another, and the foundation upon which communities built their prosperity.

From the fertile fields surrounding Gusau and Kaura Namoda to the farming settlements of Talata Mafara, Anka, Bungudu and beyond, the rhythm of life followed the seasons. The arrival of the rains brought renewed activity to the fields, while the harvest opened another season of exchange, movement and commerce.

Markets became meeting grounds where farmers brought their produce, pastoralists traded livestock, and merchants negotiated the value of goods that had travelled across considerable distances.

These communities were never isolated from the wider world. Long before European colonial administration, commercial networks connected Hausaland with neighbouring emirates, the Sokoto Caliphate and the great trading centres of the central Sudan. Agricultural produce, livestock, leather goods and locally manufactured commodities circulated through routes maintained by generations of traders.

Yet the arrival of British colonial rule would profoundly alter the scale, direction and purpose of this commerce.



WHEN THE HARVEST BECAME AN EXPORT

As British authority expanded across Northern Nigeria in the early twentieth century, colonial administrators increasingly recognised the commercial potential of the region's agricultural production.

Cotton was particularly attractive because it supplied raw material to Britain's textile industries. Groundnuts, meanwhile, became an increasingly important source of vegetable oil for industrial manufacturing and consumer products.

The expanding export trade encouraged greater commercial cultivation and drew farmers into an economy increasingly influenced by overseas demand and prices.

But this transformation was not simply a story of new opportunities.

For generations, farmers had cultivated their land primarily to sustain households, supply local markets and participate in regional trade. Under colonial rule, agricultural production became increasingly tied to an imperial economic system in which raw materials were exported for processing and manufactured goods were brought back for sale.

The fields remained in African hands, and the labour remained overwhelmingly African. Yet much of the industrial value generated from these commodities was realised elsewhere.

It was an economic relationship that would leave a lasting imprint on Northern Nigeria.

THE RAILWAY OPENS THE LAND

The arrival of the railway in what is today Zamfara was no accident. It was the product of an empire that had begun to recognise the immense economic possibilities of the vast territories of Northern Nigeria.

By the early twentieth century, British colonial rule was gradually reshaping the political and economic landscape of the region. Across Zamfara's fertile plains lay an abundance of agricultural wealth, flourishing markets and communities whose livelihoods had been sustained for generations through farming, livestock rearing, craftsmanship and trade.

The land was rich, and its people were industrious.

From the agricultural settlements of the countryside to the historic commercial centres of the region, Zamfara possessed an economy deeply rooted in the productivity of its soil and the enterprise of its inhabitants. Cotton, groundnuts, grains and livestock moved through established trading networks, connecting communities long before the first locomotive appeared on the horizon.

The British recognised this wealth. But their interest extended beyond the prosperity of the people who cultivated it. They envisioned a vast commercial network through which the agricultural resources of the northern interior could be transported to distant markets, coastal ports and eventually overseas.

There was, however, one great obstacle: distance.

Between the productive lands of Zamfara and the Atlantic coast stretched hundreds of miles. For generations, merchants had crossed these distances along caravan routes, carrying goods between towns and trading settlements. These journeys demanded patience, endurance and considerable effort.

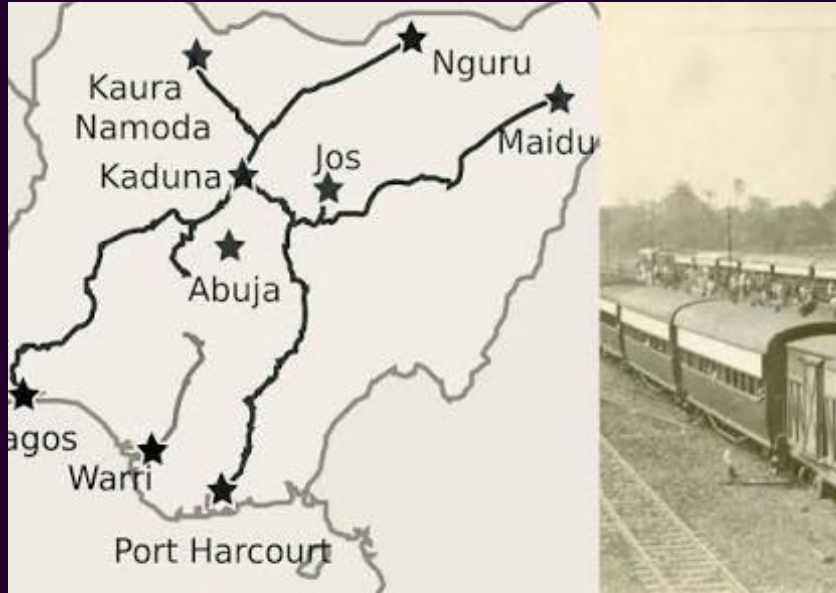
The colonial administration sought something faster, something capable of carrying greater quantities of produce across greater distances.

And so came the railway.

As iron tracks advanced through Northern Nigeria, the colonial economy began to acquire a new shape. The railway represented more than an extraordinary feat of engineering. It was a powerful instrument of British economic ambition, designed to connect the wealth of the interior with the demands of international commerce.

When the railway reached Gusau, it introduced a new chapter in Zamfara's commercial history.

The movement of agricultural produce became increasingly connected to railway transportation. Markets gained access to wider trading networks, merchants encountered new commercial opportunities, and Gusau gradually strengthened its position as an important centre of exchange.



Around the railway, the rhythms of everyday life began to change. The arrival and departure of trains brought merchants, travellers and goods, while the station became a gateway between Zamfara's agricultural heartlands and the wider colonial economy.

Yet the railway carried a contradiction.

To the British, it offered an efficient means of transporting valuable commodities and strengthening colonial control. To the people of Zamfara, it also opened possibilities for commerce, mobility and urban growth, even as the economic system remained largely structured around imperial interests.

The railway had not created the wealth of Zamfara. That wealth had existed for centuries, nurtured by the hands of farmers, sustained by traders and inherited through generations of labour.

What the railway changed was the distance that wealth could travel.

In the decades that followed, the railway would contribute to Gusau's emergence as a significant commercial and administrative centre, helping shape the foundations of the city that would eventually become the capital of Zamfara State.

The tracks were laid in pursuit of colonial ambition, but their influence would reach far beyond the age of empire.

They became part of Zamfara's enduring story: a land whose natural abundance had attracted distant interests, whose people had sustained a thriving economy long before colonial rule, and whose commercial importance would continue to evolve long after the trains first crossed its plains.

A railway designed around the export economy



Long before the first locomotive reached Gusau, colonial surveyors had begun tracing a route through the northern landscape. In 1924, preliminary surveys laid the foundation for the railway extension into what is today Zamfara State.

With approval granted in 1925, construction advanced northwestwards from Zaria. Workers prepared the ground, laid railway tracks and developed the infrastructure necessary to carry the line across the countryside.

Progress continued through Funtua towards Gusau. Behind the engineering achievement stood African labourers, some mobilised under compulsory colonial labour arrangements, whose contributions remain an important part of the railway's history.

On 1 January 1929, the railway opened to Gusau. By 1 October, the extension had reached Kaura Namoda, completing a remarkable chapter in the region's transport history.

With the railway now in operation, a new rhythm of movement emerged. Cotton from Gusau, Tsafe and surrounding settlements, groundnuts from Kaura Namoda, grains, hides and skins found their way onto railway wagons. Tobacco cultivated around Talata Mafara would later become another commercial commodity. From neighbouring communities and across the Niger frontier came traders and agricultural produce, while passengers travelled between towns that had once been separated by long journeys. The railway had become more than a passage for locomotives; it was a meeting point of people, markets and livelihoods.



ZAMFARA'S INDUSTRIAL BOOM

The story of Zamfara's economic development did not end in its fertile fields or bustling markets. By the mid-twentieth century, the territory that would later become Zamfara State was witnessing another chapter of economic transformation.

At the heart of this development stood Gusau, where agricultural production, railway connections and expanding commercial activities helped establish a growing industrial base. Cotton processing, manufacturing and other enterprises gradually transformed the town into an important centre of industrial activity in northwestern Nigeria.



Among the establishments that defined this era were Gusau's numerous textile industries, the Gusau Oil Mill, the sweet factory and several other manufacturing and agro-processing enterprises. Together, these industries created employment, attracted investment and contributed to the region's growing commercial importance.

Their influence extended far beyond Zamfara. People arrived from different parts of Nigeria and overseas, drawn by opportunities to work in the factories, manage industrial operations, provide technical expertise and establish businesses. Foreign professionals, entrepreneurs and skilled workers joined local communities, bringing different cultures, experiences and knowledge into the growing industrial town.

It was a remarkable chapter in Zamfara's history, when the hum of factory machinery was accompanied by the arrival of new faces, new ideas and new opportunities, shaping an industrial legacy whose stories deserve to be told.

THE FACTORIES THAT FUELLED THE BOOM

A value chain linking farms, ginneries, looms and wages

Zamfara Textile Industry became one of Gusau's most important manufacturing institutions. A 2016 News Agency of Nigeria report described it as established in 1965, while a separate 1999 fieldwork table records 1963. That difference should remain visible in the historical notes until archival company records settle the exact date.

The mill included ginning, spinning and weaving. This made cotton more than an export crop: it could become industrial input. Farmers supplied cotton; ginneries prepared fibre; factory workers transformed it into cloth; transporters and traders moved the finished product.

Industrial employment also supported a wider urban economy. Regular wages sustained households and local commerce, while machinery created demand for technical and maintenance skills. This is why the later collapse cannot be measured only by factory output.



Textile machinery representing the weaving stage of the cotton value chain.



OIL MILL

On Wednesday, 30 January 1974, Gusau Oil Mill Limited was officially inaugurated by General Yakubu Gowon, then Head of Nigeria's Federal Military Government. The occasion marked an important milestone in the industrial development of the territory that would later become Zamfara State. Established to process agricultural raw materials, particularly cottonseed, the mill represented a growing effort to turn the region's agricultural abundance into industrial products. Rather than allowing every harvest to leave the region in its raw form, facilities such as the oil mill created opportunities for local processing, employment and commercial activity.

The mill's significance extended beyond the extraction of vegetable oil. Cottonseed, once separated from cotton fibre, could be processed into oil and other useful by-products, including materials for livestock feed. This created additional value from crops already cultivated across the region. For farmers, industrial processing offered another potential market for agricultural produce. For workers, it opened opportunities in machinery operation, maintenance, transportation and factory services. Today, the surviving inauguration plaque stands as a historical reminder of an era when industrial investment sought to connect Zamfara's agricultural resources with manufacturing and wider economic development.



WHEN THE MACHINES FELL SILENT

There was a time when the sound of machinery echoed through the industrial quarters of Gusau. Factory floors bustled with workers, cotton passed through spinning machines, groundnuts were processed into oil, and the products of Zamfara's fertile lands found their way into markets far beyond its borders. Industry was not merely an economic activity; it was part of the city's identity, a symbol of its ambition and a promise of prosperity for generations to come.

Gusau was a city that produced. Its textile mills, cotton ginneries, oil-processing facilities and other enterprises formed an economic network connecting farmers to factories, traders to markets, and ordinary households to dependable livelihoods. Behind every functioning machine stood a worker, behind every factory stood a community, and behind every finished product lay the labour of a region rich in agricultural resources.

But that prosperity would not last forever.

Then came 1996.

With the creation of Zamfara State, a new chapter began. Yet, in a strange and painful irony, what was expected to mark the beginning of greater prosperity seemed almost to cast a curse upon Gusau's industrial fortunes. The factories that had once defined its economic strength gradually fell silent, their machinery surrendered to rust, and industrial compounds that had once been centres of productivity became shadows of their former selves.

The decline had, in truth, begun even before statehood.

Across Nigeria, industries were already struggling with unreliable electricity, ageing equipment, rising production costs, import competition and an increasingly difficult manufacturing environment. Yet the years that followed brought little of the revival that might have rescued Gusau's weakening industrial foundations.



One after another, the engines stopped turning. Workers lost their livelihoods, farmers lost dependable buyers, and businesses that had grown around industrial activity began to disappear. At Zamfara Textile Industry alone, more than 2,500 workers were reportedly laid off in 2004. The consequences reached far beyond the factory gates, affecting families, cotton producers, transporters, traders and the wider local economy. Perhaps the greatest tragedy was not simply the closure of the factories, but the abandonment of what they represented. Industrial buildings remained standing, yet their purpose faded. Equipment that had once transformed agricultural produce into valuable commodities was left idle, while the knowledge and experience of skilled workers risked disappearing with each passing generation.

Gusau continued to expand as an administrative capital, with government institutions, offices and residential neighbourhoods reshaping its landscape. Yet beneath that growth lay an uncomfortable contradiction: the city was becoming increasingly important as a centre of government while losing much of the productive economy that had once sustained it.

The land had not lost its fertility. The farmers had not forgotten how to cultivate it. The people had not lost their capacity for enterprise. What had weakened was the system that connected these resources to factories, employment and markets.

And as the machines fell silent, another sound that had once defined Gusau's commercial life was gradually fading too: the distant rumble of trains along the railway tracks.



WHEN THE TRAINS WENT QUIET

For generations, the railway was one of Gusau's most important connections to the outside world. Its tracks stretched beyond the city, linking the agricultural heartlands of what is today Zamfara State to distant commercial centres. Through this network, commodities travelled, markets expanded, and the region became part of a wider economic system that reached far beyond its immediate boundaries.

The railway was more than steel tracks laid upon the earth. It was a passage through which prosperity travelled. It carried agricultural produce towards processing centres and markets, brought goods into the region, and supported the movement of people whose livelihoods depended upon commerce.

But like the factories it had helped sustain, the railway gradually lost its vitality.

The trains became less dependable, services deteriorated, and the infrastructure that had once represented modern transportation increasingly became a reminder of an earlier age. Stations that had witnessed the movement of passengers and goods lost their former importance, while ageing tracks and facilities were left without the comprehensive modernisation needed to sustain a competitive transport system. Unlike Gusau's industries, the railway was a national asset, and its decline formed part of a much broader deterioration of railway transportation across Nigeria. Years of inadequate investment, ageing infrastructure, maintenance difficulties and increasing dependence on road transport weakened a network that had once connected communities and supported economic activity.

For Gusau, however, the consequences were deeply local.



As industrial activity declined, the railway lost part of the commercial economy it had once served. And as rail transportation weakened, the movement of agricultural produce and industrial goods became increasingly dependent on roads. Two systems that had once complemented one another were gradually losing their ability to support the region's economic development.

While railway technology advanced elsewhere, Gusau remained largely disconnected from the benefits of modern passenger and freight rail services. The old railway corridor survived as a physical reminder of connectivity, but its former economic significance had diminished. What makes this history particularly painful is that the resources which once justified these investments have not disappeared. Zamfara still possesses extensive agricultural land, communities of farmers, commercial centres and the potential for processing industries that could serve markets across Nigeria.

Yet much of the infrastructure that once connected these opportunities was allowed to deteriorate.

The silence of the factories and the fading of the railway tell a larger story of lost economic capacity. It is a story not of a land without potential, but of productive systems that were never adequately sustained, renewed or modernised.

Today, the abandoned machinery and ageing railway infrastructure stand as reminders of a different Gusau, a city whose importance was once measured not only by the offices it housed, but by the goods it produced and the markets it connected.

The factories may have fallen silent, and the trains may no longer arrive as they once did, but the foundations of that earlier prosperity remain in the land, its resources and its people.

For Gusau, the question is no longer simply what was lost, but whether the engines of prosperity can ever be made to turn again.

1 OCTOBER 1996

On 1 October 1996, as Nigeria marked its 36th Independence Anniversary, General Sani Abacha announced the creation of six new states, bringing the federation from thirty to thirty-six. Among them was Zamfara, carved out of the old Sokoto State, with Gusau designated as its capital. It was a historic moment for a people whose aspirations for political autonomy had endured for decades.

Yet Zamfara was not simply a gift from the military government. Long before the announcement, prominent sons of the region, traditional leaders, politicians and community elders had advocated for a state of their own. They believed that greater political independence would bring government closer to the people, improve representation and allow the region to determine its own developmental priorities.

Among those remembered for their involvement in the struggle were Alhaji Abubakar Tunau Mafara, Malam Yahaya Gusau, Alhaji Malami Buwai, Engineer Abdu Gusau, Alhaji Ibrahim Birnin Tsaba, Alhaji Sani Abdullahi Tsafe, Alhaji Mamman Nakwada, Alhaji Ahmed Nahuche and General Aliyu Mohammed Gusau. Their names form part of the wider history of political mobilisation that preceded Zamfara's creation.

The announcement also came at a politically sensitive moment in Nigeria's history. Abacha's military administration faced questions about its legitimacy and its promised transition to civilian rule. Creating new states offered an opportunity to respond to longstanding regional demands while potentially broadening political acceptance of the regime.

In December 1995, Abacha had established a committee to examine demands for new states, local governments and boundary adjustments. By October 1996, the government had approved six new states, distributed across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones: Zamfara, Gombe, Nasarawa, Ekiti, Ebonyi and Bayelsa. The decision reflected both the pressures for greater representation and the federal government's political calculations.

For Zamfara, however, the significance extended beyond national politics. A territory with its own ancient kingdoms, agricultural wealth, commercial towns and industrial foundations had finally acquired a distinct political identity within the Nigerian federation.

Colonel Jibril Bala Yakubu became its first military administrator, overseeing the establishment of the new state's institutions until the return to civilian government in May 1999.

The long-awaited state had been born. What remained was the greater challenge of transforming political independence into economic prosperity.



THE RETURN TO CIVILIAN RULE

A national transition reaches the young state



The death of General Sani Abacha on 8 June 1998 marked a turning point in Nigeria's political history. After years of military rule, uncertainty and repeated attempts at democratic transition, the country once again stood at the threshold of civilian government. General Abdulsalami Abubakar, who succeeded Abacha as Head of State, introduced a transition programme that would eventually bring an end to military rule and usher in Nigeria's Fourth Republic.

For Zamfara, the transition carried particular significance. Created barely three years earlier, the young state had spent its formative years under military administration. Its institutions were still developing, its political identity was taking shape, and its people were preparing, for the first time, to elect a governor who would determine the direction of their newly established state.

The elections of 1999 brought Ahmad Sani Yerima of the All People's Party (APP) to power as Zamfara's first democratically elected governor. On 29 May 1999, as Olusegun Obasanjo was sworn in as President of Nigeria, Yerima assumed office in Gusau, opening a new chapter in the state's history.

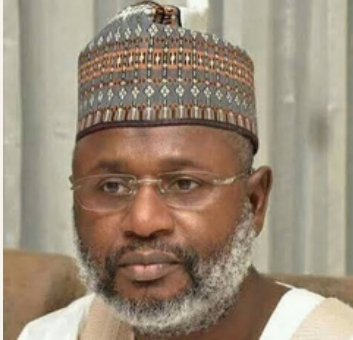
The significance of that moment extended beyond the ceremonial transfer of power. For the first time since Zamfara's creation, responsibility for its development rested with an elected civilian administration. The new government inherited the enormous task of building institutions, expanding public services, strengthening infrastructure and transforming a recently created administrative territory into a functioning state.

Yet the return to democracy also brought new political expectations. Roads, schools, hospitals, agriculture and economic opportunities became measures by which successive administrations would be judged. Decisions taken during these early years would leave lasting marks on Zamfara's political, social and physical landscape.



What began in May 1999 was therefore more than a change of government. It was the beginning of a continuing democratic journey, one in which the ambitions of a young state would be tested against the realities of governance, public expectations and the responsibility of shaping its own future.

ZAMFARA THROUGH FOUR ADMINISTRATIONS



1999-2007

AHMAD SANI YERIMA

The first civilian administration and consolidation of the young state.

Zamfara's first civilian governor introduced Sharia-based criminal law in 1999, sparking nationwide controversy. Critics questioned its constitutionality and argued that the young state needed infrastructure, education and economic development rather than religious reforms, while supporters viewed it as a restoration of Islamic justice.

2007-2011

MAHMUD ALIYU SHINKAFI.

(2007–2011)

Zamfara's second civilian governor and former deputy to Ahmad Sani Yerima, Shinkafi pursued economic diversification through agriculture, mineral resources and investment. His administration also witnessed political realignment, including his defection from the ANPP to the PDP, before losing his re-election bid in 2011.

Export-oriented ambitions: cargo airport, minerals, processing and investment.



2011-2019

ABDUL'AZIZ YARI

Yari governed Zamfara for eight years, during which rural banditry, cattle rustling and mass killings escalated into a major security crisis. His administration pursued infrastructure and education projects, but worsening insecurity, displacement and attacks on farming communities increasingly dominated the state's development story.

A period increasingly shaped by the escalation of rural insecurity and its fiscal/social consequences.

2019-2023

BELLO MATAWALLE emerged as governor following a Supreme Court ruling that overturned the APC's electoral victories in Zamfara. His administration pursued peace negotiations and amnesty programmes with armed bandits, but persistent attacks, kidnappings and displacement continued to challenge the state. His tenure also witnessed renewed efforts to develop Gusau International Airport, alongside political realignments and continuing security concerns.



A GLIMMER OF HOPE THE PROMISE OF ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION

During his administration, Mahmud Aliyu Shinkafi recognised the enormous economic potential of Zamfara's fertile agricultural lands and abundant mineral resources. He envisioned a state connected to international markets through an ambitious cargo airport, agricultural processing and mineral development. In a 2010 interview, Shinkafi emphasised the importance of air connectivity in attracting investors, revealing that site clearing for the proposed airport had already begun. His vision extended beyond aviation, imagining a commercial gateway through which agricultural produce, livestock products and processed minerals could reach distant markets. However, political disagreements and shifting alliances complicated his administration. Following his electoral defeat in 2011, several development initiatives lost momentum, while the proposed cargo airport remained unfinished. The project would subsequently be revisited by later administrations.



What began as an ambitious vision for economic transformation became a reminder of one of Zamfara's enduring development challenges: when political leadership changes, promising projects can be left behind, and the cost of discontinuity is ultimately borne by the people.



2011-2023

THE YEARS OF STAGNATION



The tragedy of these years was not simply that ambitious projects remained unfinished. It was that, while Zamfara struggled to build its future, thousands of its people were fighting to survive the present.

By the end of Yari's administration in 2019, insecurity had become one of the defining challenges confronting the state, leaving consequences that would extend far beyond his eight years in office.

Zamfara entered 2011 with unfinished ambitions and the promise of economic transformation. Yet the eight years that followed would become increasingly defined by abandoned aspirations, deteriorating security and growing questions about the priorities of government.

Under Abdulaziz Yari's administration, the cargo airport envisioned by his predecessor remained unfinished, while the wider ambition of connecting Zamfara's agricultural and mineral wealth to international markets struggled to materialise. The failure to sustain such projects raised a troubling question: why should the development of an entire state depend on the political fortunes of those who initiated its projects?

But beyond unfinished buildings and neglected infrastructure, a far greater tragedy was unfolding across Zamfara's countryside. What began as localised conflicts between farmers and herders escalated into organised banditry, cattle rustling, kidnappings and mass killings. Communities that had depended on farming for generations increasingly found themselves unable to cultivate their land without fear. Villages were attacked, families displaced and livelihoods destroyed.

By 2018, the scale of the catastrophe had become impossible to ignore. Human Rights Watch documented at least 400 deaths and more than 38,000 displaced people that year alone. Despite security deployments, armed groups continued to terrorise rural communities.

For many residents, the question was no longer when development would arrive, but whether the government could guarantee their most fundamental right: the right to live in safety.



By 2019, Zamfara had already endured years of insecurity, economic stagnation and unfinished development projects. The arrival of a new civilian administration brought renewed promises of peace, reconstruction and prosperity. Yet four years later, the condition of essential public services and several major projects raised serious questions about what had actually been achieved. Across Gusau, deteriorating roads and neglected public infrastructure reflected the growing burden of years of inadequate investment and maintenance. The state capital, expected to represent the progress of Zamfara, continued to struggle with basic amenities. By the closing months of the administration, water shortages had become severe, with the public supply system reportedly failing for months.

The difficulties extended into the civil service. By May 2023, workers were owed approximately three and a half months of salaries, while longstanding pension and gratuity obligations remained unsettled. Government offices, including the Government House, faced electricity disconnections over unpaid bills. In education, outstanding examination fees disrupted students' access to WAEC and NECO examinations and certificates.

Meanwhile, projects presented as symbols of economic transformation remained unfinished. The proposed Gusau International Cargo Airport, repeatedly associated with promises of improved connectivity and investment, was still far from operational. A subsequent government review reported payments of approximately ₦6.78 billion against a project assessed at less than 20 per cent completion.

The unfinished airport was not an isolated concern. The long-abandoned Zamfara Investment House had been the subject of an explicit campaign promise in 2019, yet its anticipated contribution to the state's economy remained unrealised. Other construction projects subsequently attracted allegations of substantial payments despite limited physical progress.



The contrast between official ambitions and conditions on the ground was increasingly difficult to ignore. Roads needed rehabilitation, households needed water, workers needed their wages, and students needed access to examinations. Above all, communities still needed protection from the insecurity that continued to devastate rural Zamfara.

By the time the administration ended on 29 May 2023, the state faced not only unfinished projects but also a crisis of public confidence. The central question was no longer how many projects had been announced or how much money had been allocated, but what had actually been delivered to the people.

For Zamfara, these years demonstrated the painful distance that can exist between the announcement of development and its reality.

DAUDA TO THE RESCUE: SHAPING THE STATE

In 2023, Zamfara stood at a crossroads. Years of insecurity, deteriorating infrastructure, unpaid salaries, abandoned projects and declining public services had left a state rich in potential struggling to fulfil its promise. Frustration had grown, and many citizens desperately yearned for change, for leadership that could restore confidence and offer a different future.

Then came Dauda Lawal, whose emergence inspired renewed hope among supporters who saw in him a possible messiah for a state desperately seeking transformation.

On 29 May 2023, he assumed office, inheriting enormous challenges, including a severely constrained treasury, outstanding financial obligations, neglected public institutions and persistent insecurity.

But Lawal did not wait. His administration moved swiftly to address inherited challenges, introducing reforms, reviving abandoned projects and launching infrastructure renewal programmes. Despite the difficult financial circumstances, his government maintained that it was pursuing these interventions without borrowing, placing emphasis on financial discipline and improved revenue management. From roads and schools to hospitals, water infrastructure and public administration, the Rescue Zamfara agenda began taking shape. For a state that had endured years of unfulfilled promises, the emerging question was whether this renewed determination could translate into lasting transformation, restoring not only infrastructure but also the confidence of its people.



GETTING BACK ON TRACK

Fiscal Prudence, Accountability, Transparency and Economic Recovery

The task before the new administration was enormous. Across Zamfara, years of inadequate maintenance and interrupted development had left roads deteriorating, classrooms neglected, healthcare facilities struggling and essential public services in need of urgent attention.

For Governor Dauda Lawal, the challenge was not merely to introduce new projects, but to confront the accumulated consequences of years of institutional and infrastructural decline. His administration began pursuing an ambitious programme of urban renewal, educational reform, healthcare rehabilitation, improved water supply and financial restructuring. Long-delayed infrastructure projects were revisited, while efforts to restore public confidence in government became central to the Rescue Zamfara agenda.

In Gusau, road reconstruction and urban renewal began changing parts of the capital's physical landscape. Across the state, interventions in schools, hospitals and primary healthcare centres sought to address the condition of public facilities.

The administration also placed emphasis on clearing outstanding obligations, strengthening revenue collection and improving the management of public resources, while maintaining its stated position that development projects were being financed without new borrowing.

Yet the challenges remained substantial. Insecurity continued to threaten rural communities, and the scale of infrastructure and public-service needs extended far beyond what could be resolved in a single programme.

The transformation of Zamfara would therefore require more than construction. It would demand continuity, accountability and institutions capable of sustaining progress beyond any one administration.

Rebuilding Zamfara required more than repairing roads and renovating public buildings. It demanded a fundamental change in how public money was generated, managed and spent. With outstanding financial obligations and a constrained treasury, the administration placed fiscal discipline, accountability and prudent resource management at the centre of its economic reform agenda.

Efforts to strengthen internally generated revenue (IGR), digitise government transactions, improve procurement and close revenue leakages became important pillars of this approach. Rather than relying entirely on federal allocations, the state sought to strengthen its own revenue base while directing public expenditure towards essential services and development projects.

The results began to appear in fiscal assessments. According to BudgIT's State of States reports, Zamfara rose from 36th position in 2023 to 26th in 2024 and 17th in 2025. Its total revenue reached ₦315.53 billion in 2024, including ₦25.46 billion in internally generated revenue.

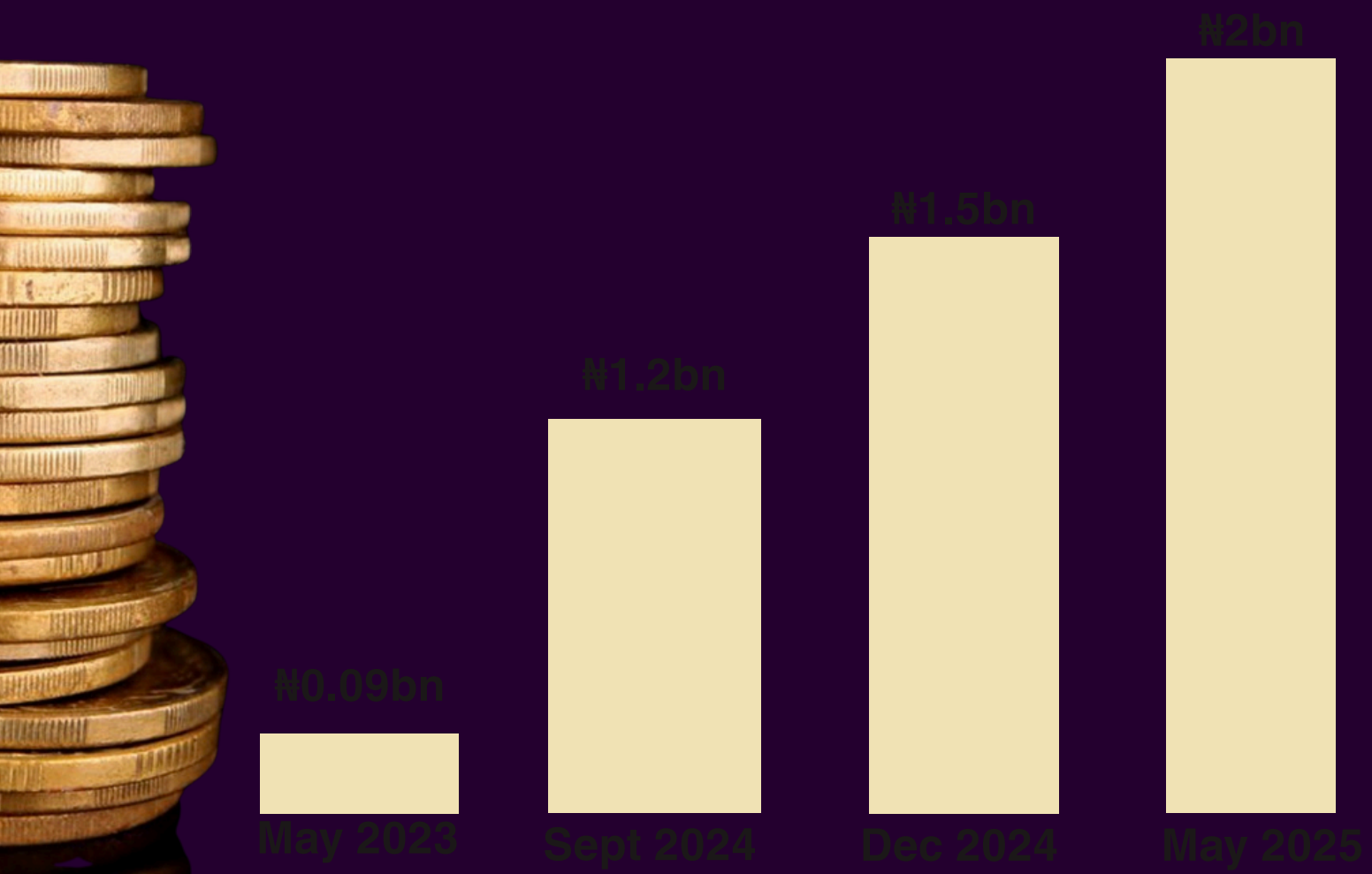
The administration also maintained that its development programmes were being implemented without contracting new loans. In 2026, the government ordered an end to cash-based revenue collection, seeking to improve transparency, strengthen digital payment systems and reduce opportunities for financial leakages.

Yet fiscal recovery is not measured by rankings alone. Zamfara still faces the challenge of expanding its independent revenue base, reducing dependence on federal allocations and ensuring that improved public finances translate into better services and economic opportunities.

For a state once weighed down by financial uncertainty, getting back on track meant establishing a more sustainable foundation for development, one built on financial discipline, stronger institutions and greater accountability for every naira spent.



IGR GROWTH



horizon Forward Times

PEOPLE | PROGRESS | OPPORTUNITIES | A STRONGER ZAMFARA

THREE YEARS FOR A STRONGER ZAMFARA

HOW GOVERNOR DAUDA LAWAL TURNED CHALLENGES INTO PROGRESS

Three years ago, Zamfara inherited a state with just N4 million, salary and pension backlogs, a KEDCO debt burden, failing water supply, dilapidated schools and healthcare facilities, and critical infrastructure in decline. Today, under Governor Dauda Lawal's leadership, the state is on a new path — with restored fiscal stability, cleared salary arrears, settled KEDCO backlog, improved water supply, major road networks, renovated hospitals and PHCs, a reinvigorated education sector, and a growing economy creating opportunities for the people of Zamfara.



REBUILDING ZAMFARA

The urban-renewal project kicks off



Other interventions covered the Central Police Station–Freedom Square corridor, Old Market Road, General Hospital–Old Market Road, Emir’s Palace–Sabon Gari axis and additional connections serving neighbourhoods throughout the capital.

The programme also brought renewed attention to the city’s junctions, drainage networks and public spaces. Particularly significant was the redevelopment of the former Bello Barau Roundabout into Freedom Square, introducing a new civic landmark into the evolving urban landscape of Gusau.

These interventions went beyond resurfacing deteriorated roads. They formed part of an effort to improve connectivity, ease movement, strengthen commercial activity and address longstanding infrastructure deficiencies.

For a city whose roads connect government institutions, traditional establishments, markets, schools, hospitals and residential communities, the importance of such investments extends beyond the appearance of newly laid asphalt. It lies in how people move, how businesses operate and how the city accommodates future growth.

From the initial works of 2023 to the subsequent phases of construction, Gusau’s urban-renewal programme has continued to redefine important parts of the capital, reflecting a broader ambition to modernise its infrastructure and improve the urban environment.

In August 2023, the sound of heavy machinery began to echo through the streets of Gusau. Roads that had endured years of deterioration became construction sites as Governor Dauda Lawal’s administration launched an ambitious urban-renewal programme to reshape the state capital.

What began with the reconstruction of major township roads soon developed into a wide programme of road rehabilitation, drainage improvements and urban infrastructure development, reaching important commercial, residential and administrative districts.

The transformation extended across some of Gusau’s busiest corridors, including the Samaru–Lalan Road, Tudun Wada–Airport Road, Freedom Square–Government House Road, Government House–Gada Biyu Road, and routes connecting Freedom Square, UBA Roundabout and Nasiha Chemist Junction.



Road reconstruction in Gusau, with Government House visible in the background.

A DIFFERENT CAPITAL

A city coming alive with commerce, modern infrastructure and emerging opportunities



Completed Gusau junction after urban-renewal works.

Gusau is gradually taking on a new identity. Beyond the newly reconstructed roads and redesigned junctions, a more vibrant urban landscape is emerging, characterised by growing commercial activities, expanding businesses, new buildings and renewed economic activity across the state capital. Along its busy streets, shops, restaurants, hotels, offices and commercial establishments contribute to the rhythm of a city in transition. Construction activities and emerging structures are reshaping parts of the skyline, while improved road networks are changing how people, goods and services move between residential neighbourhoods, markets and commercial districts.

The transformation is particularly visible along major corridors, where reconstructed roads, modern streetlights, landscaped medians, pedestrian walkways and improved intersections have introduced a more organised urban environment. Freedom Square, once a conventional roundabout, has become a prominent landmark in the changing appearance of the capital. Good infrastructure does more than beautify a city. It creates conditions in which businesses can operate more efficiently, customers can access commercial centres more easily, and investors can identify opportunities for development. As connectivity improves, the potential for commercial expansion, property development and employment grows alongside it.

From the bustle of its markets to the emergence of new commercial buildings, Gusau's changing landscape tells a story extending beyond government construction projects. It is also a story of entrepreneurs, traders, property developers and residents whose daily activities give the city its economic energy.

The challenge ahead is to sustain this momentum through reliable public services, effective urban planning, infrastructure maintenance and an environment that encourages productive investment.

Gusau is no longer simply a city undergoing road reconstruction. It is a capital gradually redefining its appearance, commercial character and ambitions for the future.



GUSAU COMES ALIVE

26Countdown: Bringing the Celebration Home

For years, the dazzling lights, electrifying countdowns and grand New Year's Eve celebrations were experiences many associated with cities like Lagos, Abuja and Kaduna, or international destinations such as Dubai. These were places where thousands gathered to welcome a new year amid music, entertainment, spectacular displays and unforgettable moments. For many young people in Gusau, such experiences were something to admire from afar, watch on television or encounter through social media.

But as 2025 drew to a close, that experience was brought home.

With the introduction of 26Countdown Gusau, the city witnessed a celebration that reflected the excitement, creativity and youthful energy often associated with larger entertainment destinations. Held at Jifatu Gusau, the event brought people together to celebrate the arrival of 2026, creating an atmosphere of joy, anticipation and togetherness.

The enthusiasm surrounding the event was evident in its sold-out tickets and the excitement of attendees. For one memorable evening, families, friends and young people had an opportunity to celebrate within their own city, without needing to travel hundreds of kilometres in search of entertainment.



Hospitality & Accommodation

JAIZ HOTEL, GUSAU

Established in 2015, Jaiz Hotel has become a well-known hospitality destination in Gusau. Under the leadership of its Chairman, Malam Habib Balarabe, the hotel offers comfortable accommodation, a welcoming restaurant and a versatile event space, catering to business travellers, official engagements, leisure visitors and private gatherings.



GUEST ROOMS

Well-maintained and air-conditioned rooms designed for a comfortable stay. Suitable for business, leisure and official visits, Jaiz Hotel provides a relaxing and convenient place to rest while in Gusau.



DAGORI HALL

A versatile event space for meetings, training sessions, conferences, private gatherings and special occasions. Dagori Hall features modern finishes and a warm, inviting atmosphere, making it suitable for both corporate and social events.



MAIN BUILDING

The main hotel building welcomes guests with a distinctive design, clean surroundings and a peaceful environment, providing convenient access to the hotel's rooms, restaurant and event facilities.



RESTAURANT

A selection of local and continental dishes served in a clean and welcoming restaurant. Renowned for its cleanliness and quality service, the restaurant is a popular choice for in-house guests and visitors alike.



ANNEX BUILDING

The annex provides additional rooms and facilities, offering more space and convenience for guests, groups and events.

- Jaiz Hotel, Gusau
Zamfara State, Nigeria
- Established 2015
- Chairman: Malam Habib Balarabe

GATEWAY TO PROSPERITY



For decades, the dream of an airport in Gusau remained on paper, a long-standing ambition that passed through successive administrations without becoming reality. Despite repeated promises and announcements, the vision of connecting Zamfara to the wider world remained largely unfulfilled.

On 20 June 2024, that ambition entered a new chapter as Governor Dauda Lawal formally launched the construction of Gusau International Airport along Kaura Namoda Road, in a ceremony performed by the Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Festus Keyamo.

But beyond the runways, terminals and aircraft lies a much greater vision: an economic gateway capable of opening Zamfara to investment, commerce, tourism and new opportunities.

For a state blessed with vast agricultural resources, mineral deposits and enormous untapped economic potential, air connectivity represents more than convenience. It offers the prospect of faster business travel, improved access for investors, stronger commercial relationships and greater integration with national and international markets.

On 22 March 2026, the airport witnessed a significant milestone with the arrival of a Federal Government Bombardier Challenger 605 aircraft on an assessment flight. By September, preparations for commercial operations had advanced further, signalling the gradual transformation of a long-standing ambition into reality.

The airport is therefore not merely a transportation project. It is a statement of possibility, a new doorway through which Zamfara can begin to connect its resources, people and ambitions to the opportunities of a wider world.

A gateway to prosperity, and a new horizon for Zamfara.




PROGRAMME OF EVENTS
FOR THE
**OFFICIAL FLAG-OFF FOR THE CONSTRUCTION
OF GUSAU INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT**
IN THE FIRST YEAR
of
His Excellency
DAUDA LAWAL
To be performed by
MR. FESTUS KEYAMO, SAN, CON
HONOURABLE MINISTER OF AVIATION
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

» **VENUE:** AIRPORT SITE, KAURA NAMODA ROAD, GUSAU,
ZAMFARA STATE
» **DATE:** THURSDAY 20TH JUNE, 2024

ZAMFARA: OPEN FOR BUSINESS

For decades, Zamfara's enormous economic potential remained constrained by limited connectivity, inadequate infrastructure and opportunities that struggled to move beyond the state's borders. Blessed with vast agricultural lands, abundant mineral resources, a growing population and an entrepreneurial spirit, the state possessed much of what was needed for prosperity. What it lacked was the infrastructure and investment environment to fully unlock these possibilities. Today, a new chapter is unfolding. With renewed investment in roads, aviation, urban infrastructure and public services, Zamfara is gradually repositioning itself as a destination for commerce, enterprise and investment.

The development of Gusau International Airport represents one of the most significant milestones in this transformation. For a state that had long depended heavily on road transportation, the prospect of regular commercial flights connecting Gusau to Abuja and other economic centres offers more than convenience. It opens new possibilities for investors, entrepreneurs, government institutions and visitors.

In September 2026, the emergence of XEJet's Abuja–Gusau service plans signalled growing interest in connecting Zamfara to Nigeria's wider aviation network. Such connectivity could reduce travel barriers, encourage business visits, facilitate trade and strengthen the state's accessibility.

Yet an airport alone cannot build an economy. Its true value lies in the opportunities it helps create. Agricultural producers need markets, industries require reliable infrastructure, businesses need access to capital, and investors seek an environment defined by security, transparency and confidence. Beyond aviation, ongoing urban renewal projects, improvements to major roads and efforts to strengthen internally generated revenue reflect a broader ambition to rebuild the foundations of economic growth.

For Zamfara, opening for business means more than welcoming aircraft or constructing modern buildings. It means creating an environment where ideas can become enterprises, where local products can reach distant markets, where young people can find opportunities and where the state's resources can translate into lasting prosperity.

The message is clear: Zamfara is looking beyond its challenges, opening its doors to opportunity and inviting the world to discover its potential.



Gusau Takes Flight

XEJet begins Abuja-Gusau commercial service

A new chapter for Zamfara as scheduled flights connect the state to the nation's capital, boosting travel, trade and investment.

By Our Correspondent
Gusau

Zamfara has taken a major step in its connectivity with the commencement of scheduled commercial flights at Gusau International Airport, following the launch of XEJet's Abuja-Gusau service in October 2026.

The new route, operating twice weekly, is expected to provide a faster and more convenient link for travellers, businesses and investors, while supporting the state government's broader drive to open up Zamfara's economy.

A MODERN AIRPORT FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE

Construction of Gusau International Airport was formally launched in June 2024 as part of the state government's plan to improve transport infrastructure, enhance commerce and position Zamfara as an investment destination.

The airport features a 3.4-kilometre runway capable of handling large commercial aircraft, a modern passenger terminal, air traffic control facilities, runway lighting, navigational aids, Customs and Immigration facilities, aircraft maintenance hangars, fire and rescue services, fuel storage and a dedicated cargo component.

From Hajj Flights to Regular Service

Gusau International Airport made history on 15 May 2026 when it handled Zamfara's first direct Hajj flight, with a Max Air aircraft carrying 415 pilgrims to Saudi Arabia.

The successful Hajj operation demonstrated the airport's readiness for larger commercial operations, paving the way for the introduction of regular scheduled flights.

Connecting Zamfara to New Opportunities

By Our Correspondent

The Abuja-Gusau service is part of the state government's Air Route Development Partnership, aimed at attracting more airlines, expanding domestic and international connections and supporting tourism, trade and investment.

Officials say the new service will ease travel for government officials, businesses, students and the wider public, while also creating new opportunities for the movement of goods and agricultural produce out of the state.



Boosting Trade, Tourism and Investment

With improved air connectivity, Zamfara is better placed to attract investors, support tourism and facilitate the movement of agricultural and mineral resources. The airport is expected to create jobs, stimulate economic activity and strengthen the state's integration with regional and global markets.

A Strategic Gateway for the North-West

Gusau International Airport is envisioned as a key aviation hub in the North-West, linking Zamfara to major cities across Nigeria and, in the future, international destinations.

The commencement of XEJet's Abuja-Gusau service marks the beginning of a new era of connectivity, growth and opportunity for the people of Zamfara State.

Mineralogical Catalogue



GOLD

Au

Zamfara is one of Nigeria's most important gold-producing states, with mineralisation found in several local government areas.

IRON ORE

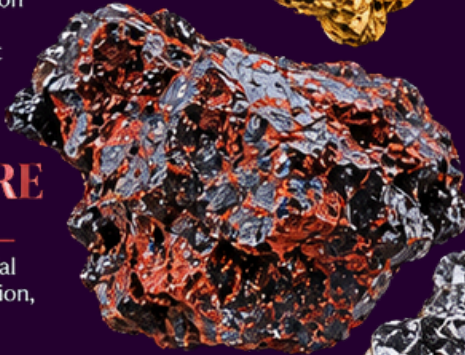
Fe

A key raw material for steel production, important for construction, engineering and industrial development.

ZINC

Zn

Important for galvanising, alloys and industrial applications.



SILVER

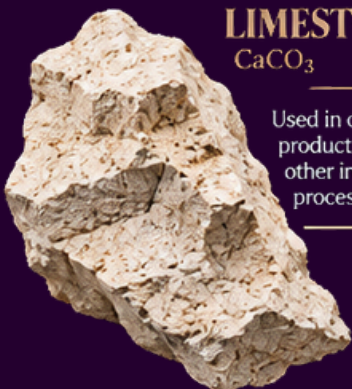
Ag

Valued for jewellery, electronics and specialised industrial uses.

LIMESTONE

CaCO₃

Used in cement production and other industrial processes.



LITHIUM

Li

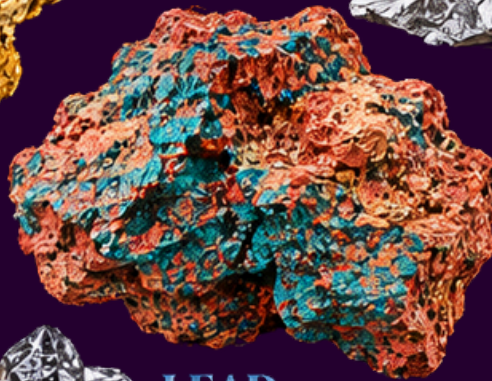
A critical mineral for clean energy technologies. Zamfara has significant lithium-bearing deposits, with growing investment in exploration and processing.



COPPER

Cu

An essential metal for electricity, renewable energy and modern infrastructure. Zamfara has identified copper deposits with strong potential.



LEAD

Pb

Used in batteries, galvanised steel and industrial manufacturing.



QUARTZ

SiO₂

Used in glassmaking and various industrial applications.



MANGANESE

Mn

Used in steel production and certain battery technologies.

KAOLIN AND CLAY

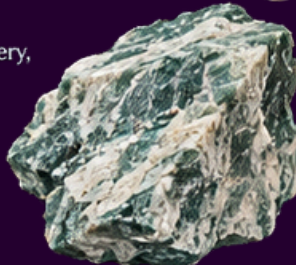
Important for ceramics, construction and manufacturing industries.



TALC

Mg₃Si₄O₁₀(OH)₂

Used in ceramics, paints, plastics and other industrial products.



GYPSUM

CaSO₄·2H₂O

Used in cement, plaster and construction materials.



GRANITE

A valuable construction material used in buildings and monuments.



BITUMEN

(Asphalt)

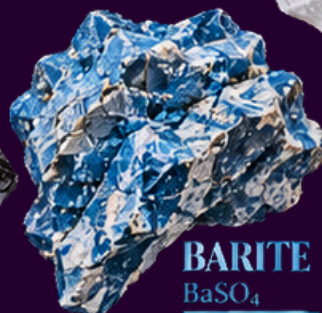
Valuable for road construction and industrial uses.



BARITE

BaSO₄

Used particularly in drilling operations.



SITTING ON A FORTUNE

Zamfara's Vast Mineral Wealth and the Promise of Industrial Prosperity



On 12 July 2026, the Zamfara State Government announced the commissioning of the Zamfara Lithium Mining and Processing Plant at Boko Village in Zurmi LGA. The government described it as a \$200 million joint investment involving ZAM Mining Company Ltd, Bima Mines Ltd, Jinlide Mining Co. Ltd and other partners.

The historical significance lies in processing. The magazine began with a colonial economy that moved raw agricultural commodities outward. It later showed local factories trying to retain more value within Gusau. A modern mineral-processing plant raises the same question in a new sector: can Zamfara move beyond extraction and capture more value locally?

The announced investment figure is not itself proof of impact. The next measures are production capacity, actual capital deployed, local employment, skills transfer, environmental safeguards, community benefits, taxes and whether downstream industries emerge around the plant.

ANKA: WHERE MINERAL WEALTH MEETS INDUSTRY

Beyond Zurmi, another example of Zamfara’s industrial potential can be found in Anka Local Government Area, where Comet Star Industry operates a privately owned mineral-processing facility. On 2 April 2025, Governor Dauda Lawal visited the factory as part of a wider inspection of mining operations across Anka and Maru. Owned by Prince James Uduji, the facility was reported to process approximately 1,000 tonnes of material daily. Equipped with crushing machinery, conveyor systems, shaking tables, a laboratory and its own power facilities, the plant demonstrates how modern technology can support mineral processing within Zamfara rather than leaving the state dependent entirely on raw extraction. The governor’s visit also highlighted the importance of attracting credible private investment, strengthening security and establishing a more organised mining industry. Together, the facilities in Zurmi and Anka point towards a future in which Zamfara’s underground wealth can support industries above ground. But the true measure of progress will not be the minerals extracted alone. It will be the jobs created, the communities empowered, the environment protected and the prosperity shared.



With the development of Gusau International Airport and the airstrip in Anka, Zamfara’s solid minerals sector stands to benefit from improved connectivity and greater accessibility. These transport facilities could encourage further investment, facilitate the movement of investors and technical experts, and strengthen links between the state’s mineral-rich communities and wider markets. As interest in lithium, gold and other valuable minerals grows, improved infrastructure offers an opportunity to attract new industries, expand mineral processing and unlock greater economic value from Zamfara’s natural resources.

A LAND OF GREATER POSSIBILITIES

The history of Zamfara is not a straight line from poverty to progress, nor from an idyllic past to decline. It is a history of productive land, colonial extraction, commercial expansion, railway connectivity, industrial ambition, lost factories, weakened transport, state creation, democratic government, insecurity and repeated attempts to reconnect the economy.

Dauda Lawal's administration is the final chapter because it is the chapter still being written. Roads have altered the appearance and movement of Gusau. Old gratuity liabilities have been addressed according to government records. The airport has moved from a decades-old ambition toward aviation operations. Mining policy is being tied to local processing. Public finance and institutional reform are being presented as the machinery that must sustain these assets.

The historical test is larger than any administration: can Zamfara turn land and resources into durable production, production into value, value into jobs and revenue, and revenue into services that survive political cycles?

That is the horizon.

LAND → PRODUCTION → CONNECTIVITY → PROCESSING → MARKET → PROSPERITY

THE QUESTION IS WHETHER THE CONNECTION CAN LAST.

INVEST IN ZAMFARA

Agriculture • Infrastructure • Solid Minerals • Human Capital



Zamfara State | 2026

WOMAN ON A BATTLEFIELD

JUSTICE BALKISU BELLO ALIYU

In a society where power and influence often test the boundaries of justice, there are individuals whose unwavering commitment to principle distinguishes them. Among them stands Hon. Justice Balkisu Bello Aliyu, a distinguished daughter of Zamfara State whose journey through Nigeria's legal institutions reflects decades of public service, courage and dedication to the rule of law. Born on 23 December 1965 in Maru, present-day Zamfara State, Justice Aliyu began her education at J.N.I. Primary School, Tsafe, before proceeding to Federal Government College, Wukari. She obtained her law degree from Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, in 1988 and completed her professional legal training at the Nigerian Law School, Lagos, in 1989.

Her professional journey began in 1990 when she joined the Sokoto State Ministry of Justice as State Counsel. In 1992, she was appointed a Magistrate, rising to the position of Chief Magistrate and Deputy Chief Registrar in 1997. Her dedication to public service subsequently earned her appointment as Solicitor-General and Permanent Secretary of the Zamfara State Ministry of Justice in 1999, placing her among the senior legal and administrative officers responsible for strengthening the institutions of the young state.



Her career entered a new chapter in September 2002 when she was appointed a Judge of the Federal High Court of Nigeria. After nearly sixteen years of service at that level, she was elevated to the Court of Appeal on 22 June 2018, marking another significant milestone in her judicial career. Beyond her professional achievements, Justice Aliyu is recognised for her firm opposition to corruption and her commitment to integrity, accountability and due process. Her career reflects the importance of judicial independence, particularly when the administration of justice intersects with political authority and powerful interests. Her commitment to public service also extends to education. A supporter of educational opportunities, particularly for the girl child, she represents the belief that empowering young women through education is essential to building stronger communities and a more equitable society. For Justice Aliyu, the battlefield is not one of weapons, but of principles. It is the courage to uphold the law, the discipline to resist improper influence and the conviction that justice must remain greater than power. From serving Zamfara State as Solicitor-General and Permanent Secretary to occupying a distinguished position in Nigeria's appellate judiciary, her journey stands as a testament to the remarkable contributions of Zamfara's sons and daughters to national development.



THE BUSINESS TYCOON

ALHAJI SAMBO GARBA, MON

From the historic city of Gusau to the expanding business landscape of Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory, Alhaji Sambo Garba, MON, has built a reputation as an entrepreneur whose ambitions extend across real estate, mining, agriculture and investment. His journey reflects a determination to transform opportunities into enterprises, contributing to economic development beyond the borders of his home state, Zamfara.

Before establishing himself in the private sector, Sambo Garba began his professional career at the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), where he spent nearly a decade gaining experience in financial regulation, securities transactions and corporate operations. This early exposure to Nigeria's financial system laid the foundation for his transition into entrepreneurship. In 2013, he established Bima Shelter Limited, a real estate development company operating in Abuja. Through the development of residential estates and housing projects, the company has contributed to the capital's expanding property market, responding to the growing demand for modern residential accommodation.

But his vision was never confined to buildings and property development. Recognising the enormous opportunities within Nigeria's natural resources, he extended his business interests into the mining sector through Bima Mines Limited. His involvement in mining reflects the growing importance of solid minerals to Nigeria's efforts to diversify its economy beyond petroleum.

His entrepreneurial interests also extend to agriculture, commodity trading and other commercial ventures, including Triple Gee Merchants and Chemcraft Nigeria Limited. Together, these investments illustrate a business philosophy centred on diversification, identifying opportunities across sectors and building enterprises capable of participating in Nigeria's evolving economy.



Behind these accomplishments lies a strong educational foundation. Sambo Garba studied Business Administration at Bayero University, Kano, before obtaining a Master of Business Administration from Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. He also attended Lagos Business School, further strengthening his knowledge of business leadership and management. His contributions to enterprise and national development have earned him recognition beyond the business community. In 2022, he was awarded the national honour of Member of the Order of the Niger (MON). He also holds the traditional title of Sardaunan Gusau, reflecting his standing within his community. For Zamfara, a state endowed with agricultural potential, mineral resources and a growing generation of ambitious young people, his story carries particular significance. It demonstrates how enterprise can connect local ambition with national opportunities, while highlighting the importance of investment, innovation and economic diversification.



A MAN OF LEGACY

Alhaji Sagir Hamidu — A Life of Ambition, Generosity and

Lasting Impact

Some people are remembered for the positions they occupied. Others are remembered for the wealth they accumulated. But the most enduring legacies are often those measured in human lives — the opportunities created, the dreams encouraged and the people whose futures were changed through one person's kindness.

For the late Alhaji Sagir Hamidu, success was never simply a matter of personal achievement. His life reflected an ambition to build, to serve and to create opportunities that would outlive him. He was a man of considerable vision, but equally important was his belief that the benefits of success should extend beyond himself and his immediate family.

Those who knew him remember more than an entrepreneur or a man with political aspirations. They remember someone who believed in the potential of others, particularly young people, and who was prepared to invest in that potential.

His generosity was not limited to words or promises. It was reflected in the opportunities he created for others, particularly young people whose circumstances might otherwise have prevented them from reaching their full potential. He believed that success carried a responsibility to uplift others, and that wealth and influence were most meaningful when used to improve lives.

Education became one of the clearest expressions of this belief. For Sagir, a child's future should never be determined by the financial circumstances of their parents. He understood that talent existed in every community, but opportunity did not. He was determined, wherever possible, to help bridge that gap.



This conviction would eventually lead him to establish FAMAKS British School, an institution that reflected both his ambitious vision for educational excellence and his extraordinary willingness to invest in the future of others.

Founded in 2008 and officially opened on 12 January 2009, the school began with nursery and primary education. From the outset, Sagir sought to create an environment that stood apart from conventional private schools. He drew heavily on British educational standards, bringing in teaching resources and equipment from Britain, alongside educational professionals who helped establish the school's early academic culture.

Yet his ambitions extended beyond modern facilities and academic achievement. He placed considerable importance on discipline, good character, respectful behaviour and healthy competition among students. He wanted children to receive an education that would shape not only their knowledge but also their confidence, values and sense of responsibility.

Alhaji Sagir Hamidu — A Life of Ambition, Generosity and Lasting Impact

What made his approach particularly remarkable was his willingness to place social impact above financial gain. Although FAMAKS was a privately established institution, Sagir operated it with an almost non-profit philosophy. He provided scholarships, reduced the financial burden on families and supported children who might otherwise have struggled to access quality education.

Among those who benefited were students from Zamfara State, including approximately 50 children who received educational support at different stages of their schooling. Some completed their studies during his lifetime, while others were still pursuing their education when he passed away. For Sagir, these were not merely charitable gestures. They were investments in human potential, made with the understanding that educating one child could transform the future of an entire family.

His vision continued to grow. In 2010, FAMAKS expanded to Kaduna, while plans were also set in motion for a branch in Gusau, Zamfara State. Construction of the proposed Gusau campus began but was eventually suspended amid financial and political challenges. Nevertheless, the project reflected his enduring ambition to bring educational opportunities closer to the communities he cared deeply about.

Following his passing, FAMAKS faced serious difficulties. Its dependence on his personal financial commitment and generosity made sustaining the institution's distinctive model increasingly challenging.



The struggles that followed revealed the extent to which his presence had been central to its survival.

But to measure Sagir Hamidu's legacy solely by the fortunes of the school would be to overlook the greater story of his life. His influence reached beyond classrooms, buildings and business ventures. It lived in the people he encouraged, the families he supported, the ambitions he nurtured and the opportunities he made possible.

Buildings may close, institutions may struggle and circumstances may change. But the impact of a life devoted to lifting others can endure for generations.

That is the legacy of Alhaji Sagir Hamidu.



“Every child deserves access to quality education, regardless of their background or financial circumstances.”

THE CREATIVE FORCE: DRIVERS OF CHANGE

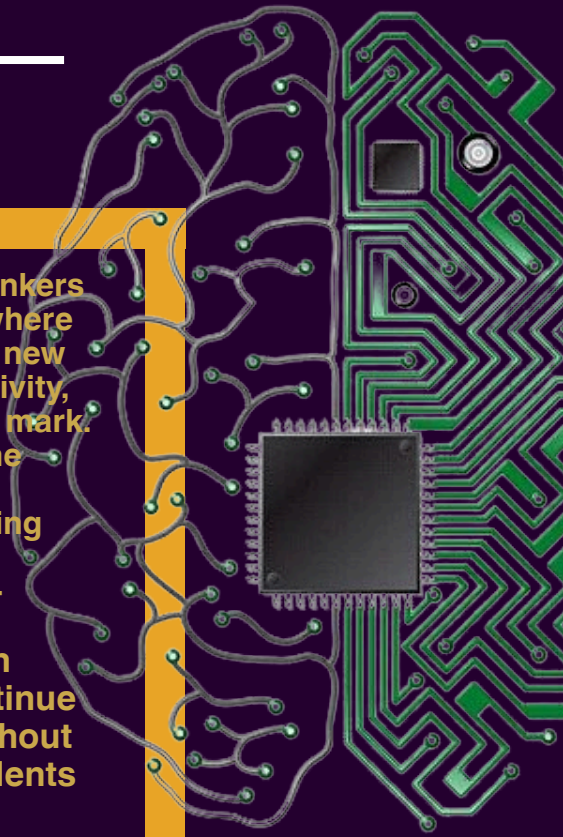
Celebrating Zamfara's Young Innovators, Creators & Changemakers

Every generation has its dreamers, its thinkers and those who dare to see possibilities where others see limitations. Across Zamfara, a new generation is emerging, armed with creativity, ambition and a determination to make its mark. From the strokes of an artist's brush to the codes of a software developer, from entrepreneurial ventures to groundbreaking ideas, young Zamfarans are finding their voices and carving their paths in an ever-changing world.

Some have already earned recognition beyond our borders, while others continue to build their dreams quietly, often without the opportunities or platforms their talents deserve.

Yet their stories share something remarkable: the courage to create, the determination to innovate and the ambition to make a difference.

In the pages that follow, HORIZON ZAMFARA celebrates some of these extraordinary minds, their journeys, achievements and aspirations. They represent a glimpse of the creativity and human potential that exists across our state. These are our people. These are their stories. And this is the creative force driving change.



"We have so many young people on our continent with innovative ideas. We can harness their creativity, embrace technology and develop solutions to our problems. We can make Africa a leader in innovation."

— Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala



A GENERATION WITHOUT LIMITS

“

I want the next Dotun Popoola, the next Bayo Omoboriowo, and the next generation of pilots, engineers, scientists, artists, innovators and great thinkers to emerge from Zamfara State. I want our young women to grow up knowing that their dreams are not limited by where they come from. I want to see women like Amina J. Mohammed, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie emerge from our communities, leading global institutions, shaping policies, influencing culture and inspiring generations.

For too long, the story of Zamfara has been dominated by its challenges, while the extraordinary potential of its young people remains largely unseen. Yet I believe that within our towns, villages, classrooms and communities are brilliant minds waiting for an opportunity to shine.



Talent is everywhere, but opportunity is not. This belief is at the heart of my commitment to STEAM education and the wider mission of Show Zamfara. Every child deserves the opportunity to explore, create, innovate and compete confidently with the best, not only in Nigeria but across the world.

I dream of a Zamfara where young people develop groundbreaking technologies, produce world-class art, lead scientific discoveries, establish successful businesses and contribute meaningfully to the progress of humanity. Through HORIZON ZAMFARA, we are beginning by telling their stories, celebrating their achievements and giving visibility to talents that deserve to be recognised.

Because the future of Zamfara will not be shaped by infrastructure and natural resources alone, but by the creativity, knowledge, courage and ambition of its people.

I believe we can raise a generation that will change Zamfara's story. And I believe we will.

— Mustapha Attahir

”

THE CREATIVE MIND

Aminu Kabiru Musa (Oxerus)

Bridging Technology, Art and Cultural Heritage

Meet Aminu Kabiru Musa, popularly known as Oxerus, a young software developer, digital artist and creative innovator from Gusau, Zamfara State, whose journey reflects the remarkable potential of a generation determined to redefine what is possible.

At a time when technology is transforming industries and creating new opportunities across the world, Aminu is among the young minds demonstrating that innovation can emerge from anywhere, including communities whose talents have often remained outside the national spotlight.

His journey into software development began not with a major investment or an established technology company, but with a personal challenge: the struggle to maintain consistency and discipline in everyday activities. Rather than simply accepting the difficulty, he began searching for a practical solution.



Oxerus showcasing his award-winning productivity application.



Blades of Arewa A digital illustration depicting traditional Hausa architecture and cultural symbols.

That search gave birth to APEX, a self-development and productivity-tracking application designed to help individuals organise their daily activities, develop discipline and improve themselves by one percent each day. What began as an attempt to solve a personal problem gradually evolved into an innovation with the potential to help others overcome similar challenges.

FROM AN IDEA TO RECOGNITION

As a Software Engineering student at Maryam Abacha American University of Nigeria (MAAUN), Aminu continued developing his technological skills while exploring ways to transform ideas into practical solutions.

His work eventually earned first place at the MAAUN Tech Exhibition, marking an important milestone in his journey as a young developer.

The achievement was followed by an opportunity to present his innovation to Zamfara State government officials, demonstrating how young people from the state can contribute to solving everyday problems through technology.

Beyond developing software, Aminu has also explored content creation and digital entrepreneurship, applying his creativity to projects and collaborations involving businesses such as Shawarma Hub and Kaafman.



Oxerus presenting his artwork to His Royal Highness, the Emir of Gusau.

His growing portfolio reflects an understanding that technology and creativity are not separate worlds. Both offer opportunities to solve problems, communicate ideas and build enterprises. For Aminu, innovation is not necessarily about creating something complicated. Sometimes, it begins with recognising a simple problem and having the determination to develop a solution. His story offers an important reminder to young people across Zamfara: the journey towards innovation does not always begin with extraordinary resources. It can begin with curiosity, consistency and the courage to try.

BLADES OF AREWA: REIMAGINING HERITAGE

This conviction inspired Blades of Arewa, an artistic collection that reimagines traditional Hausa warriors through contemporary digital illustration.

Drawing inspiration from the aska biyu twin blades, the Arewa knot and traditional mud-brick architecture, Aminu combines historical symbols with dramatic skies, imaginative compositions and modern artistic techniques.

Each artwork is produced in a limited edition of five, accompanied by a notebook explaining its cultural significance.

The collection has attracted recognition from traditional institutions, with Aminu personally presenting artworks to the Emirs of Gusau and Kano.

These encounters represent more than personal achievements. They demonstrate how contemporary creativity can engage with traditional leadership, preserve cultural identity and introduce younger generations to the artistic richness of their heritage.

Through his illustrations, Aminu is not merely reproducing historical symbols. He is giving them new visual interpretations, ensuring that the stories and identities they represent remain relevant in a changing world.



Oxerus presenting his artwork to His Royal Highness, the Emir of Kano, Muhammadu Sanusi II.

WHAT ZAMFARA MINDS CAN DO

For Aminu, however, artistic success and technological recognition are only part of a larger mission.

As he began sharing his work online, he noticed that audiences were sometimes more surprised by his origins than by the quality of his creations.

In his personal reflection, What Zamfara Minds Can Do, he writes:

“Many didn't expect someone from Arewa, let alone Zamfara, to think and build this way. That surprise stayed with me, because I knew I was not an exception. I was simply visible.”

He believes that stereotypes about Northern Nigeria have contributed to the limited recognition of talented young people, creating a cycle in which their achievements remain unseen.

Rather than allowing these perceptions to define him, Aminu has chosen to challenge them through his work.

His digital illustrations celebrate Hausa heritage. His software demonstrates technological capability. His online content introduces new audiences to creativity emerging from Northern Nigeria.

He has also begun reviewing the work of upcoming Nigerian artists, using his platform to give other creative minds greater visibility.

His message is particularly relevant to Zamfara, where many young people continue to pursue ambitions in technology, design, entrepreneurship and the creative industries despite limited opportunities for recognition.

Aminu's journey reflects a generation unwilling to be defined by stereotypes or geographical limitations. Through innovation, cultural pride and determination, he is helping demonstrate that talent from Zamfara deserves recognition far beyond the state's borders.

He concludes his reflection with a message to the next generation:

“Let my journey show you what a Zamfara mind can do. Then go further.”

— Aminu Kabiru Musa (Oxerus)

BEYOND THE DRAWING BOARD

Nafisa Attahir | Architecture, Art & Entrepreneurship

Creativity has always been a part of Nafisa Attahir's life. Long before pursuing a career in architecture, she developed a passion for drawing, expressing her imagination through sketches and artistic compositions. What began as a childhood interest gradually evolved into a broader pursuit of design, artistic expression and entrepreneurship.

A graduate of Architecture from Nile University of Nigeria, Abuja, Nafisa represents a generation of young creatives whose interests extend beyond a single profession. Her architectural education complements her artistic abilities, bringing together an appreciation for form, composition, detail and visual expression. Her passion for painting is particularly evident in her collection of artworks, which range from intricate Arabic calligraphy to contemporary abstract compositions and floral paintings. Through carefully selected colours, textures and expressive brushstrokes, she explores the relationship between art, spirituality and aesthetics.

Beyond the canvas, Nafisa has ventured into entrepreneurship through Tahmeed, a fragrance business offering perfumes for men and women, alongside handcrafted scented candles. The venture reflects her interest in creating products that combine fragrance, presentation and everyday experiences. For Nafisa, creativity is not confined to the drawing board. It extends into the spaces people inhabit, the artworks they admire and the products they use. Her journey illustrates the possibilities that emerge when artistic passion, professional education and entrepreneurial ambition come together. From childhood sketches to architectural studies, paintings and fragrance products, Nafisa continues to explore different ways of transforming ideas into tangible creations.





One of Nafisa's notable artistic projects was a commission to create calligraphic representations of the 99 Names of Allah for a mosque in Gusau, Zamfara State. The project gave her an opportunity to bring her artistic skills into a place of worship, combining Islamic calligraphy with architectural decoration. It stands as a meaningful achievement in her creative journey, reflecting her dedication to an art form she has continued to practise and develop.

In 2025, Nafisa brought a refreshing creative experience to Gusau by organising an elegant Paint and Sip event at Jaiz Hotel. The gathering brought together art enthusiasts and emerging creatives in an atmosphere of creativity, relaxation and social interaction. Beyond painting, the event introduced a fresh approach to artistic engagement in the city, creating opportunities for people to connect, express themselves and explore their creative potential. It reflected Nafisa's passion for introducing new experiences and nurturing a vibrant creative community in Zamfara.

THE ART OF PEACE

Ummusulaim | Founder & Creative Director, Sulymgraphy

In a society where art is often viewed simply as decoration, one young woman in Zamfara is giving it a deeper purpose. Through colours, brushstrokes and calligraphy, Ummusulaim, founder and creative director of Sulymgraphy, is transforming artistic expression into a medium for peace, advocacy and healing.

Based in Gusau, Zamfara State, Ummusulaim is recognised as the state's first female calligrapher, pioneering a creative path that combines traditional artistic expression with contemporary social advocacy.

A graduate of Islamic Education from the Federal University Gusau, she has built Sulymgraphy around a philosophy that art can communicate powerful messages, inspire reflection and provide comfort in challenging times.

ART BEYOND THE CANVAS

Guided by her motto, “Art is Therapy,” and her belief in “Peace on Canvas,” Ummusulaim's creative practice extends beyond conventional painting and calligraphy.

Through four areas of work—Art for Peace, Advocacy Art, commissioned artworks and calligraphy—she uses visual storytelling to encourage peaceful coexistence, advocate for conflict resolution and create safe spaces where young people can explore their creativity.

Her work reflects an understanding of the challenges facing communities in Zamfara, demonstrating how artistic expression can become a platform for dialogue, unity and positive social change.

Among her notable creations is a painting commemorating the Nigerian Army. The artwork, which she describes as her favourite, incorporates military symbolism and colours in a striking visual composition, demonstrating her ability to communicate identity and institutional recognition through art.



A VISION BEYOND ZAMFARA

Creative, dedicated and composed under pressure, Ummusulaim is determined to expand Sulymgraphy into one of Northern Nigeria's leading art studios.

Her ambition extends beyond building a successful creative enterprise. She envisions a future where more young people, particularly women, can pursue artistic careers, express their identities and contribute meaningfully to their communities.

Through Sulymgraphy, she is demonstrating that creativity is not merely a talent to be admired, but a powerful instrument for education, empowerment and social transformation.

In a state whose stories are too often defined by conflict, Ummusulaim is choosing to tell another story—one painted with hope, creativity and peace.

The Art of Calligraphy

Fatima Zaiyan janyau | Calligraphy Artist & Founder of inkBYfatouma

Fatima Zaiyan Ahmad is a passionate calligraphy artist and the creative mind behind inkBYfatouma, a brand that transforms words into beautiful expressions of art through lettering, colours, and creativity. For Fatima, calligraphy is more than the art of writing; it is a powerful means of communicating emotions, preserving meaningful messages, and turning simple words into lasting works of beauty.

Through her artistic journey, she continues to explore the relationship between creativity, culture, and self-expression, using her talent to inspire others to discover and develop their own abilities. Each piece she creates reflects her dedication, patience, imagination, and belief that art can communicate messages that go beyond words. Beyond her passion for calligraphy, Fatima hopes to see Zamfara State rise to greater heights, gaining recognition for its talents, creativity, and potential. She believes that young people in Zamfara deserve better opportunities to learn, grow, express themselves, and build meaningful careers from their talents and passions. Her vision is to contribute to a future where the younger generation is encouraged to think creatively, pursue their ambitions, and become part of the state's progress and development.



For Fatima Zaiyan Ahmad, creativity is not just a personal passion but also a pathway to empowerment, opportunity, and community development. Through inkBYfatouma, she hopes to demonstrate that talents nurtured with dedication and determination can grow into meaningful ventures that inspire others and create lasting impact.

She envisions a Zamfara State where young people are encouraged to explore their creativity, where artistic expression is valued, and where individuals have access to the resources and support needed to turn their abilities into sustainable careers. She believes that investing in young people's potential is essential to building a more innovative, confident, and prosperous society.

As she continues her journey in calligraphy, Fatima remains committed to using her creativity as a source of inspiration, encouraging others to believe in their gifts and pursue their dreams. Her story reflects the importance of passion, perseverance, and the belief that every talent has the potential to make a difference.

Through art and a strong commitment to her community, Fatima hopes to contribute to a future in which Zamfara's creativity, culture, and youthful potential receive greater recognition, both within Nigeria and beyond.



BAKOLORI: THE WATERS OF PROSPERITY



An Ambitious Vision of Agricultural Transformation

The Story of One of Northern Nigeria's Most Significant Irrigation Projects

In a region where the rhythm of life has long been determined by the arrival and departure of the rains, the ability to preserve water represents more than an engineering achievement. It represents the possibility of transforming seasons of uncertainty into opportunities for prosperity. Across the fertile plains of Zamfara, where agriculture has sustained generations, one ambitious project emerged from the desire to harness the power of water and reshape the future of farming. That vision gave rise to Bakolori Dam, one of the most significant water infrastructure projects undertaken in northern Nigeria.

Situated along the Sokoto River near Talata Mafara, in what is today Zamfara State, the Bakolori project emerged during the 1970s as part of a wider national effort to expand irrigation agriculture, improve food production and reduce dependence on seasonal rainfall. Construction commenced in 1975, and the dam was substantially completed in 1978. The reservoir subsequently filled by 1981, while the wider irrigation project was formally commissioned in April 1983, marking an important milestone in the development of large-scale agricultural infrastructure in the region. The project represented an extraordinary ambition for its time. With a reservoir designed to store approximately 450 million cubic metres of water, Bakolori was intended to support an extensive irrigation network covering roughly 23,000 hectares of agricultural land. Through canals, water-control structures and associated infrastructure, the scheme sought to transform large areas of farmland into productive agricultural territory capable of supporting cultivation beyond the traditional rainy season.

For farming communities, the promise was considerable. Reliable irrigation could enable farmers to cultivate crops during the dry season, increase agricultural output and strengthen the supply of produce to markets. Beyond the fields, greater agricultural productivity offered possibilities for food processing, transportation, trade and employment, creating economic opportunities that could extend across surrounding communities.

Yet the history of Bakolori is not without its difficulties.

The construction of the dam and its associated irrigation infrastructure profoundly affected communities whose lives had long depended on the river and surrounding agricultural land. Land acquisition, displacement and disputes over compensation generated serious grievances, culminating in a tragic confrontation in 1980 in which security forces killed protesting farmers. These events remain an important part of the project's history and a reminder that development must consider the rights and livelihoods of the communities it is intended to serve.

Over the decades, the irrigation scheme also faced operational and maintenance challenges. Deteriorating infrastructure, changing agricultural conditions and difficulties in water management prevented parts of the project from consistently achieving their intended productivity. Nevertheless, Bakolori remained an important symbol of the possibilities associated with large-scale agricultural investment.

Today, the reservoir and its irrigation infrastructure continue to represent a valuable foundation for Zamfara's agricultural future. With sustained rehabilitation, effective water management and stronger support for farming communities, the scheme could contribute to expanding dry-season cultivation, improving food security and strengthening agricultural value chains.

Its potential extends beyond the immediate irrigation fields. Increased agricultural production could encourage investment in agro-processing facilities, storage infrastructure, transportation networks and commercial markets, helping reconnect the region's agricultural abundance with the productive industries that once contributed to its prosperity. Bakolori also offers a broader lesson about the relationship between natural resources and development. Water alone does not guarantee prosperity. Its value depends upon the institutions, infrastructure and communities responsible for managing it. A reservoir may hold millions of cubic metres of water, but its greatest contribution is measured in the farms it sustains, the livelihoods it supports and the opportunities it creates.

For Zamfara, Bakolori is more than a dam. It is a monument to agricultural ambition, a reminder of the human responsibilities that accompany development, and an enduring opportunity to transform the abundance of water into the prosperity of the land.

Where water is wisely managed, the possibilities for growth need not end with the rainy season.

A Tapestry of Cultures and Traditions



Zamfara State is home to a rich blend of cultural traditions, shaped by generations of communities whose histories, languages and ways of life contribute to its unique identity. Hausa and Fulani communities, alongside other groups, have played important roles in shaping the state's social, cultural and economic landscape.

From colourful traditional attire and marriage ceremonies to music, storytelling, festivals and local craftsmanship, Zamfara's cultural heritage reflects a deep connection to history and community life. These traditions are passed down through generations, preserving values of hospitality, respect, family unity and communal responsibility.

Agriculture, livestock rearing, trading and traditional crafts have long influenced the lifestyles of communities across the state. Local markets serve not only as centres of commerce but also as meeting places where different traditions, languages and experiences come together.

Traditional clothing is another expression of this diversity. Embroidered garments, flowing robes, colourful wrappers, headwear and handmade accessories reflect cultural identities, personal expression and the artistry of local craftspeople.

Beyond visible traditions, cultural heritage lives in everyday practices: the wisdom of elders, communal celebrations, oral histories, traditional cuisine and the values that connect families and neighbours.

Together, these customs form an important part of Zamfara's identity. Celebrating and preserving them encourages mutual understanding, strengthens cultural pride and ensures that future generations appreciate the diverse heritage of their state.



Cultural Celebrations and Royal Traditions



From magnificent Durbar processions to lively Eid festivities, Zamfara's celebrations reflect the beauty of its heritage and the spirit of its people.

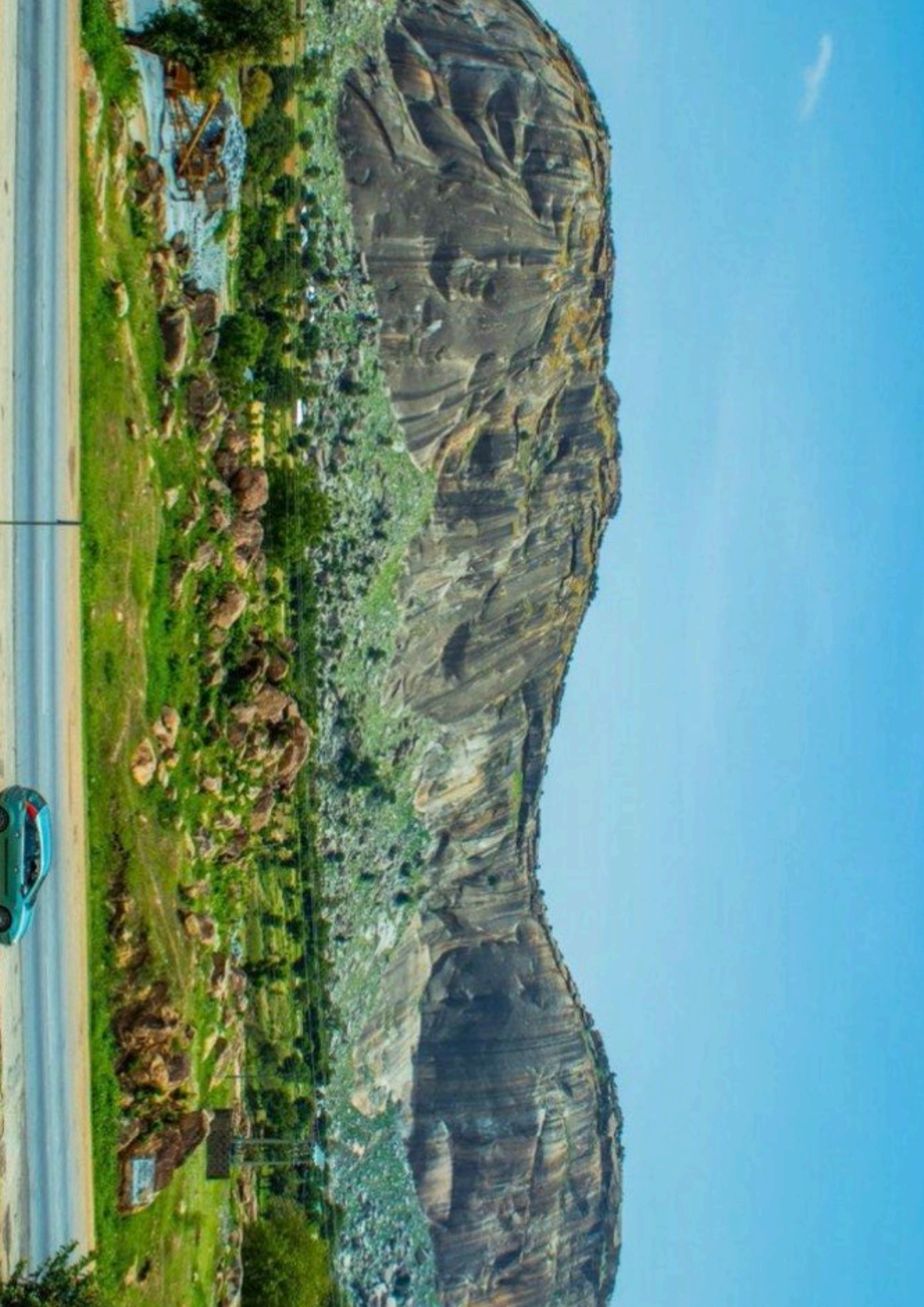
Cultural celebrations are an important part of life in Zamfara State, bringing together families, communities and generations in moments of joy, unity and cultural pride. Throughout the year, traditional ceremonies, religious festivities and community gatherings provide opportunities to celebrate shared values, preserve longstanding customs and create lasting memories. Among northern Nigeria's most spectacular cultural traditions is the Durbar, a colourful equestrian celebration associated with the region's historic emirates. Often held during major occasions such as Eid, Durbar processions feature horsemen dressed in magnificent traditional robes, turbans and embroidered garments, riding horses adorned with elaborate decorations. The sight of these riders, accompanied by ceremonial displays and enthusiastic spectators, creates an atmosphere of grandeur and excitement.

Beyond its visual splendour, Durbar reflects centuries of traditional horsemanship, royal heritage and community identity. It provides an opportunity to appreciate the craftsmanship of local artisans, the elegance of traditional clothing and the enduring significance of emirate institutions.

A memorable example of this living tradition was the Hawan Daudu celebration held in Gusau on 2 April 2025. The procession, identified as Hawan Yan Galadimomin Gusau, travelled on horseback from the Emir's Palace in Kanwuri, passing through Freedom Square towards the Government House. Participants appeared in colourful ceremonial attire, riding beautifully decorated horses through the streets of the state capital.

The celebration offered a remarkable display of cultural pride, bringing the splendour of traditional horsemanship into the public streets of Gusau. The vibrant clothing, decorated horses and youthful participation made it a striking illustration of how heritage continues to find expression in contemporary Zamfara. Such occasions demonstrate that cultural traditions are not merely memories of the past but living experiences embraced by new generations.

Beyond Durbar, Eid celebrations bring their own special excitement to Zamfara. Following congregational prayers, families and friends exchange visits, share festive meals, wear beautiful new outfits and gather to celebrate. Streets, recreational spaces and community venues become places of enjoyment as residents embrace the festive atmosphere. Funfairs and recreational activities add another dimension to these celebrations, particularly for children and young people. Amusement rides, games, music, food stalls and family outings provide opportunities for entertainment and social interaction. For many families, these experiences become cherished memories associated with the joy of Eid. Traditional weddings, naming ceremonies and other community festivities further enrich Zamfara's cultural landscape. From colourful attire and customary rituals to music, hospitality and communal support, each occasion reflects the values that connect people across generations. These celebrations also contribute to local economic activity. Tailors, textile merchants, horse decorators, photographers, food vendors, event organisers and small businesses benefit from the demand created by festive occasions, demonstrating how cultural heritage can support livelihoods and encourage local enterprise. Ultimately, the beauty of Zamfara's celebrations lies not only in their colours, ceremonies or entertainment, but in their ability to bring people together. Whether through the magnificent spectacle of Durbar, the excitement of an Eid funfair or the warmth of a family gathering, these traditions preserve a sense of belonging and remind future generations of the richness of their cultural inheritance.



KWATARKWASHI: THE GIANT OF UNTAPPED POSSIBILITIES

Across Nigeria, certain natural landmarks have become inseparable from the identities of the places they inhabit. In Abuja, the magnificent Aso Rock rises above the nation's capital, while Zuma Rock, standing majestically in neighbouring Niger State, has become one of the country's most recognisable geological monuments. These extraordinary formations are more than masses of ancient stone; they are symbols of identity, natural beauty and the possibilities that emerge when geography becomes part of a destination's appeal.

Yet, hundreds of kilometres away, in the heart of Zamfara, stands another remarkable giant whose potential remains largely unexplored.

Kwatarkwashi Rock.

Rising dramatically above the surrounding plains in Bungudu Local Government Area, Kwatarkwashi is among Zamfara's most striking natural landmarks. Its enormous rocky formations, rugged surfaces and commanding presence create a magnificent landscape that has watched generations of communities flourish beneath its shadow. Beyond its physical grandeur, the mountain carries stories, traditions and cultural significance that have become part of the identity of the surrounding settlements.

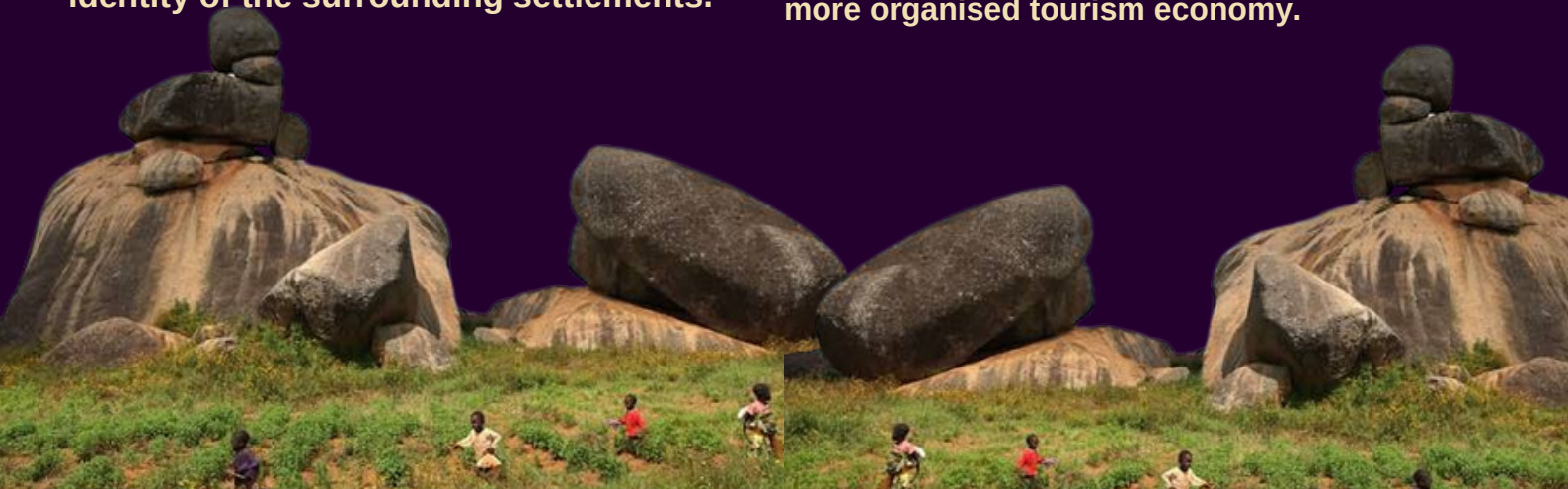
Rising dramatically above the surrounding plains in Bungudu Local Government Area, Kwatarkwashi is among Zamfara's most striking natural landmarks. Its enormous rocky formations, rugged surfaces and commanding presence create a magnificent landscape that has watched generations of communities flourish beneath its shadow. Beyond its physical grandeur, the mountain carries stories, traditions and cultural significance that have become part of the identity of the surrounding settlements.

But what makes Kwatarkwashi particularly remarkable is not merely its natural beauty. It is the opportunity that surrounds it.

A NATURAL ADVANTAGE

Unlike many scenic attractions situated deep within remote landscapes, Kwatarkwashi enjoys a potentially valuable geographical advantage: its relative proximity to Gusau, the Zamfara State capital. Its location offers opportunities to connect a natural attraction with an established urban centre, where accommodation, commercial activities, transport services and other visitor facilities could be developed or strengthened.

The development of Gusau Airport presents another opportunity. With reliable air services and improved ground transportation, visitors travelling from other Nigerian cities could potentially reach the state capital and continue towards Kwatarkwashi. This combination of natural scenery, urban proximity and aviation infrastructure could provide a foundation for a more organised tourism economy.



The significance of this advantage should not be underestimated. Tourism destinations depend not only on what visitors come to see, but also on how conveniently and safely they can reach them.

FROM NATURAL LANDMARK TO TOURISM DESTINATION

Across the world, mountains, rock formations and other geological wonders have been transformed into recognised destinations through thoughtful investment in accessibility, conservation, recreation and hospitality. Kwatarkwashi possesses the natural foundation for a similar ambition.

Imagine a carefully developed tourism destination where visitors could explore designated hiking trails, admire panoramic views from safely constructed observation platforms, discover the history and folklore surrounding the mountain, and experience the cultural traditions of neighbouring communities.

A visitor centre, landscaped recreational areas, restaurants, craft markets and organised cultural exhibitions could create opportunities for local entrepreneurs while enriching the visitor experience. The surrounding landscape could also accommodate carefully planned hospitality and leisure facilities, provided development respects the environment and the interests of host communities.

Such possibilities would require investment, effective management, security and environmental protection. Yet the opportunities extend far beyond recreation.

Tourism could create livelihoods for local guides, photographers, artisans, transport operators, hospitality workers and small-business owners. Agricultural producers could find new markets, while traditional crafts and cultural performances could gain wider recognition.

scape has never ceased to inspire wonder. Perhaps what remains is for Zamfara to recognise that some of its greatest treasures are not buried beneath the earth, but rise majestically above it.



Indeed, research by scholars at Federal University Gusau has identified Kwatarkwashi's caves, springs, mountainous features and traditional cultural activities as potential foundations for tourism development.

THE OPPORTUNITY BEFORE ZAMFARA

The prominence of Aso Rock and Zuma Rock demonstrates how natural landmarks can become powerful symbols of geographical identity. Kwatarkwashi offers Zamfara an opportunity to establish a similarly recognisable natural landmark, while developing a visitor economy suited to its own landscape, culture and communities.

However, natural beauty alone does not create a successful tourism destination. Improved security, accessible roads, reliable transport, environmental conservation, private investment and community participation would be essential to transforming this possibility into reality.

For a state seeking to diversify its economy, the development of tourism could complement agriculture, commerce, aviation and the creative industries, opening new opportunities for employment and investment.

Kwatarkwashi has stood for generations, overlooking a landscape that has witnessed the passage of time, the growth of settlements and the changing fortunes of Zamfara.

Its magnificent rocks have never lost their grandeur. Its surrounding land

GUMMI: THE ART OF THE CALABASH

In Gummi Local Government Area of Zamfara State, the calabash represents far more than an agricultural product. It is a source of food, a household essential and a canvas for extraordinary craftsmanship. Through generations of knowledge and creativity, local communities have transformed this humble crop into products that serve both practical and artistic purposes.

One of its remarkable qualities is the usefulness of its seeds. Certain varieties of calabash and related gourds produce edible, oil-rich seeds that can be dried, processed and pressed to extract cooking oil. The seeds may also be used to prepare traditional snacks resembling kuli-kuli, demonstrating how local agricultural produce can be transformed into nutritious foods and products with commercial potential. But the calabash's value extends beyond its seeds. Once mature, the hard shell can be dried, hollowed out and carefully prepared for carving. Local artisans decorate its surface with geometric patterns, inscriptions, cultural symbols and elaborate designs, turning an ordinary natural vessel into a distinctive work of art.



Some of the most impressive creations feature the Zamfara State emblem and other official or cultural imagery. Artisans carefully carve both the exterior and interior, sometimes incorporating electric lighting to illuminate the patterns from within. At night, these decorative calabashes glow, transforming traditional craftsmanship into beautiful household ornaments and hanging lamps.

These creations demonstrate the ingenuity of Gummi's artisans, whose skills combine agriculture, design and cultural expression. What begins as a crop in the field can become food, oil, a household object or an illuminated decorative masterpiece.

The calabash industry offers opportunities for local enterprise, particularly through food processing, craft production, tourism and the preservation of traditional skills. With greater visibility, training and market access, Gummi's distinctive craftsmanship could reach audiences far beyond Zamfara State.

In Gummi, the calabash is not merely grown. It is transformed — from seed to sustenance, from shell to art.

MEET THE AUTHOR

A young Nigerian architecture student at the University of Nottingham, England, artist, creative entrepreneur and youth development advocate, Mustapha Attahir is driven by a deep passion for Zamfara State, a passion that continues to shape his ambitions and initiatives.

With a strong interest in architecture, urban planning, governance and sustainable development, Mustapha believes that the future of communities must be shaped not only by those in positions of authority, but also by young, innovative and creative minds willing to contribute ideas and create opportunities.

His interest in Zamfara's history, culture and development emerged from a desire to understand the state's enormous potential and the challenges that have prevented it from being fully realised. Concerned by narratives of insecurity, poverty and underdevelopment that have long dominated public perceptions of Zamfara, he became determined to tell a broader and more balanced story.



This ambition inspired the establishment of Show Zamfara, a media platform dedicated to showcasing the state's cultural heritage, infrastructure, development and untapped opportunities. Through the platform, he seeks to challenge misconceptions, promote civic awareness and encourage greater appreciation of Zamfara's identity.

His commitment to youth empowerment also led to the creation of Mpace Foundation, an initiative focused on education, creativity, innovation and community development. Through programmes such as STEAM Fest, he encourages young people to explore science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics, develop practical skills and contribute to solving challenges within their communities.

Beyond education and advocacy, Mustapha is interested in promoting recreation, tourism and the creative economy. His involvement in initiatives such as Gusau 26 Countdown reflects his belief that communities deserve opportunities for entertainment, cultural expression and social interaction.

As an aspiring architect, Mustapha is particularly passionate about the future of Nigerian cities. Through conceptual master plans and architectural proposals, he explores how Gusau and other cities can become more connected, productive and liveable, with improved transportation, public spaces and modern infrastructure.

For him, architecture goes beyond designing buildings; it is about creating environments that improve lives and support economic and social development.

Horizon Zamfara brings these interests together. More than a magazine, it seeks to document the state's history, examine its challenges, recognise its progress and inspire conversations about its future.

Mustapha believes that patriotism requires more than admiration for one's homeland. It demands honesty about its shortcomings, appreciation of its strengths and a willingness to contribute to its development.

"I have always wanted to be part of the development of my state. I want to see young, innovative and creative people at the forefront of shaping its future."

Through storytelling, architecture, advocacy and community initiatives, he hopes to inspire a generation that does not merely inherit the challenges of yesterday, but actively participates in building a better tomorrow.

For Mustapha, Horizon Zamfara is both a tribute to the state he calls home and an expression of his belief in what it can become.



MEET THE CO-AUTHOR

ALIYU ZAHRADEEN BELLO IMAM

Contributing Writer | HORIZON ZAMFARA

A young Nigerian cybersecurity student at Maryam Abacha American University of Nigeria (MAAUN), Kano, Aliyu Zahradeen Bello shares a deep passion for Zamfara State and a commitment to changing the narrative surrounding his homeland.

Driven by an interest in the state's history, identity and development, he believes that understanding the past is essential to appreciating the present and shaping a better future. Like many young people determined to see Zamfara recognised beyond the challenges that have dominated its public image, he hopes to contribute to a more balanced and inspiring representation of the state



'This publication is more than a collection of stories; it is an effort to document Zamfara through the voices, history, experiences and aspirations of its people. As a young writer, I believe our generation has a responsibility to preserve the past, understand the present and contribute meaningfully to the future of our state

**- Aliyu Zahradeen Bello Imam
Contributing Writer | Horizon Zamfara**

As a contributing writer to Horizon Zamfara, Aliyu worked extensively on the historical narratives surrounding the creation of Zamfara State in 1996 and the return to civilian rule in 1999. His work explored these two defining moments in greater depth, examining the events, circumstances, and political developments that shaped the emergence of Zamfara as a state and its transition into a new era of democratic governance

His contribution reflects a shared belief that Zamfara's story deserves to be told with historical awareness, honesty and a sense of responsibility.

Through his involvement in this publication, Aliyu joins a growing generation of young people seeking to preserve the state's history, challenge misconceptions and contribute to conversations about its future.

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ANTI-PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

I hereby declare that Horizon Zamfara 2026 is an original editorial publication compiled, researched and developed under my direction.

The magazine draws upon historical records, academic publications, government reports, news articles, interviews and other publicly available materials. Information obtained from external sources has been acknowledged through the references and bibliography.

Photographs, artworks and other visual materials belonging to third parties are credited to their respective creators or sources where identified. Such acknowledgement does not imply ownership or permission to reproduce copyrighted material. The narratives, editorial arrangements and interpretations presented in this publication have been developed for the purpose of documenting Zamfara State's history, heritage, development and future prospects.

I affirm my commitment to academic integrity, responsible research, accurate attribution and respect for intellectual property rights.

Mustapha Attahir

Author and Editor

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