

## Mimiko Through The Microscope

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The governor of Ondo State, Dr Olusegun Mimiko, did not just come by the name, Caring Heart. He worked for it. He deservedly earned it. He lives it. He became synonymous with



Governor olusegun Mimiko

Caring Heart for the simple reason that, for the third year running, his administration has engaged in intervening in the critical sectors of the state to make life worth living for the people.

Every sector is undergoing transformation while infrastructure that will match the aspiration to create a system that could serve the purpose of the 21st century are springing up.

When he took the baton of governance in February 2009, he had declared, 'I will work for you'. Implicit in that declaration was a message to the people, 'you have not voted me as your governor in vain?

He came out with a 12-point developmental agenda that

is today telling the story of a Caring Heart. The areas targeted by the agenda include agriculture and food security; community-driven city and coastal region renewal and general development initiatives; aggressive capitalisation of land resource, roads and infrastructure, industrialisation, no-to-poverty, and gender equality/women empowerment. Others are healthcare and housing, education and capacity-building, artisanship development and empowerment programme, rural development, tourism, sports and youth development. The Mimiko vision on agriculture and food security is that Ondo should not only be sufficient in food production, it was also an avenue to stem unemployment in the state by engaging the youths in modern day farming.

Agriculture has since been reinvented in the state while the youths have returned to the land to eliminate poverty and create wealth. About 15,000 graduates are engaged in Caring Heart Agricultural Villages at Ore in Odigbo Local Government Area, Epe in Ondo East Local Government Area and Auga in Akoko North-East Local Government Area under a participant-ownership scheme. One feature of the agricultural villages is the provision of infrastructure including housing units. The community-driven city and coastal region renewal agenda of the Mimiko administration has seen modern markets emerging from the ashes of the old ones across the state. From Akure to Okitipupa, Ikare to Owo, Ondo to Iju town, people now carry out shopping activities in decent environment as against the former dispensation when you could not distinguish between the neighbourhood markets and pig sties. The new era has moved traders away from the streets to the market stalls thereby freeing the roads from avoidable traffic caused by hawking.

Dealers in cars have also been relocated from road sides where they formerly displayed their wares, thus constituting public nuisance, especially in Akure. They now have the Caring Heart Auto Mart to operate from. The activities of the Mimiko administration in the almost three years of being in office also show that provision of good roads is high on its priority.

The rehabilitation and reconstruction works are based on the premise that government cannot drive the desired economic growth and development in the absence of good roads. The Mimiko initiative does not discriminate between state and federal roads. The mantra is 'zero-tolerance for bad roads.' Roads currently getting attention across Ondo State include Ogbese-Owo Road; Oyemekun-Adesida-Fiwasaye Road, as well as Mobil/Fiwasaye-Oba Ile-Airport Road and NEPA – Arakale Road, all in Akure; as well as Itanla Junction – Ademulegun – Idi Ishin – Yaba, Ore and Akure Motor Park Road in Ondo. Before then, the governor had caused Akure-Ilesha Road, a federal road, to be repaired, having gone into serious disrepair and causing mind-boggling accidents. Activities in the Ondo industrial sector are upswing. This is the evidence of Mimiko's impatience to industrialise the state, set a new tempo for economic growth and tackle headlong the unemployment challenge. In the pipeline is a cement manufacturing factory at Okeluse in Ose LGA. This is a product of strategic partnership with the private sector. The moribund tomato paste factory at Arigidi – Akoko has been reactivated while the Alpha – 3D Factory at Ikare-Akoko is completed. The comatose Ifon Ceramic Industry and the Cocoa Catalytic Industry, Idanre are also receiving attention. An automobile assembly plant is being constructed at Bomodeoku, Ita-Oba in Ondo East LGA. The N2 billion loan the state government got from the Bank of Industry is being disbursed to cooperatives, small scale enterprises operators and medium scale entrepreneurs to help in the creation of wealth, creation of jobs, accelerate industrialisation and stem rural-urban migration. The no-to-poverty programme of the Mimiko administration and wealth distribution policy is an affirmation action that has been translated into reality as an offshoot of the ideology of the Labour Party which produced the governor. It established skill acquisition centres in the 18 LGAs of the state for people to learn vocations through which they can make a living. There are also micro-credit facilities for low income earners.

Mimiko is also supporting the state Oil Producing Areas Development Commission (OSOPADEC) with funds to expedite the transformation of lives of the people of coastal areas of the state. For women, there is the Special Market Women Improvement Loan and Empowerment Scheme (SMILES) which gives non-collateral loans at an amazingly low nine percent interest rate. In the health sector, the Mother and Child Hospital, the Abiye Safe Motherhood project showcases the governor's position to cut the rate of infant and maternal mortality in the state. The innovation is on the way to becoming the World Bank's model to deepen safe motherhood in Africa. We also have the state-of-the-art diagnostic centre built in memory of the late activist, Chief Gani Fawehinmi and the Accident and Trauma Centre to save the lives of accident victims. The two projects are located in Ondo. The governor's intervention in the housing sector in collaboration with the private sector is bringing houses within the reach of the common man. Mimiko's '3'1's initiative' has made rural development much easier. Under the administration's rural development scheme, graduates are employed as Community Change Agents to help reach the grassroots to identify confidence building projects.

On tourism front, Idanre, the town built on amazing hills, is being developed into a tourist hub of international repute. Beyond this, a Tourism Village, to be sited in Ore, Odigbo Local Government headquarters, is in the pipeline.

The Dome, an international cultural and event centre, is also proposed for Akure.

The laurels that the football teams sponsored by the state government have been winning in international competitions are enough evidence of the pride of place sports get in the scheme of things in Ondo under the Mimiko administration.

The intervention in the education sector is lucid, and flows from a heart that truly cares. It seeks to bridge the gap between the poor and the rich, the haves and the have nots, the privileged and the less privileged. A visit to any of the mega schools will convince you that this is indeed a new dispensation in public school system in Ondo. And to be convinced of the new dispensation, you must rewind to the pre-Mimiko era in the state when the public school system not only suffered criminal neglect, but was also pushed to the brink of extinction. The public school system operated in a dilapidated environment. If you are a teacher and you are teaching in a dilapidated environment without the requisite infrastructure, it doesn't matter how good you may be, pupils cannot learn well. A government is relevant to the people only to the extent to which it provides the necessary infrastructure that will aid the work of the teacher, and this has been the preoccupation of the Mimiko administration in the state education sector. The sum total of the Ondo situation of almost three years is that Caring Heart is at work. And viewed from the microscope, the governor's sterling performance in delivering democracy dividends may be the weapon against the opposition in 2013 when he is sure to be re-elected for continuity.