

Nigeria`s FIG Young Surveyors Network: Successes, Challenges, and Prospects

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SUMMARY

Almost a decade after its inauguration in Nigeria during the Annual General Meeting of the Nigerian Institution of Surveyors in Kwara State in 2012, The Young Surveyors Network (YSN), Nigeria has remained the main umbrella body which serves as a *coming-of-age fraternity* for the large number of graduates who emerge from the numerous schools offering Surveying and Geoinformatics in Nigeria yearly. The YSN has functioned effectively by organising and carrying out volunteer services which aim to build synergy and prepare Young Surveyors for leadership. At the local, State, and National Levels, several fora exist for the purpose of achieving the fundamental goals and objectives of the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG) Young Surveyors Network. Initiatives such as Professional Development, Training Workshops, Annual Conferences (Harvest of Ideas), Workshops for Candidates preparing for the Surveyors Council of Nigeria (SURCON) Professional Examinations to be registered as Surveyors, and even community awareness about the profession are some of the programmes that the YSN, Nigeria had embarked upon. In the course of its activities, the YSN has recorded successes; it has also faced challenges which have threatened its very existence. This paper analyses the recorded successes and evaluates the challenges in order to identify the prospects for more success available to the YSN, Nigeria. To have a better understanding of these issues, Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat (SWOT) analyses were used to assess the achievements and challenges that the body has faced over the years; also the opportunities available if challenges were mitigated were also analysed. Findings revealed that if several innovative initiatives were introduced by the network and backed up by its parent bodies the YSN would achieve resilience and become formidable. Such initiatives could include setting up a funding mechanism for Young Surveyors (both graduates and students), establishing Mentorship Programmes for the Young Surveyors, encouraging “*Catch Them Young*” programmes at Secondary Schools to inform students about the profession thereby whetting their interest in the profession, as well as encouraging activities at the grass-root level.

1. INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

The FIG Young Surveyors Network is an umbrella body of Young Surveying Students and Professionals worldwide with the goal to provide an avenue for its members to network and brainstorm on issues related to Surveying and allied professions (FIG Young Surveyors Network, 2021). Since its inception, the body had organised its inaugural conference in May, 2012 in Rome (GIM, 2012), followed by its second conference in November, 2014 in Kuala Lumpur (Ever-Maria, et al., 2014). Since then, several other conferences and workshops had been organised at intercontinental, national, and local networks. The International Federation of Surveyors (FIG) equally encouraged its member associations to establish the Young Surveyors Network in their various countries and encourage the YS members with financial and moral support to execute their duties.

In Nigeria, the Young Surveyors Network (YSN) was inaugurated exactly a decade ago during the Nigerian Institution of Surveyors Annual General Meeting and Conference, Ilorin, Kwara State on the 27th June, 2012 (Onwuzuligbo, 2016). Several resolutions were reached amongst which were the establishment of YSN Executives at the National, Zonal, and States level to enhance coordination and participation of the network activities at grassroots levels.

2.0 STRUCTURE AND ORGANOGRAM OF YSN NIGERIA

In the last five years, the number of newly Registered Surveyors in Nigeria has grown steadily every year (SURCON, 2020). This is even as more than 50% of such registered Surveyors fall within the age bracket classified as Young Surveyors. This has significantly impacted the survey profession across the nation and bridged the generational gap that existed within the profession. Today, more and more schools are beginning to offer courses that lead to qualifications in Surveying and Geoinformatics and many secondary school leavers are getting enrolled to study in such tertiary institutions. This evidently shows that there is tremendous growth in the Surveying profession in Nigeria.

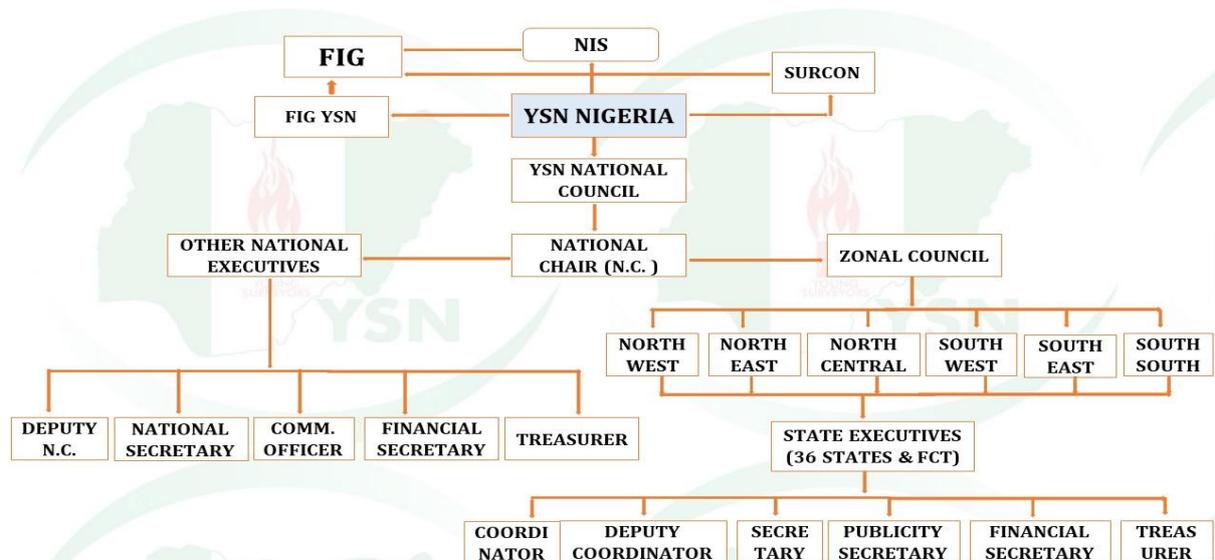


Figure 1: Organogram of the Young Surveyors Network of Nigeria

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The Young Surveyors Network Nigeria was formed to channel these youthful energies to usefulness and to groom leaders who will one day assume leadership of the profession. The aim and objectives of the YSN set out by the FIG are to foster cooperation and synergy that supports professional growth amongst young surveyors. In practice, the YSN Nigeria has in compliance with the FIG YSN objectives attempted to implement the vision with varying successes and challenges. This paper is an attempt to highlight the successes, challenges, and prospects of the YSN, Nigeria. Since its inception, specifically in:

- i. Developing institutional capacity for achieving FIG YSN aim and objectives,
- ii. Intra-Network strengthening of capacity via knowledge sharing and
- iii. Expansion of awareness amongst young surveyors in addition to increased visibility of the Survey profession beyond professional boundaries.

The scope of this paper is within the activities of the Young Surveyors Network (YSN), Nigeria, and by definition, the members of the YSN are predominantly graduates of Surveying and Geoinformatics (YSN Code of Conduct, 2015). This is because the Quantity Surveying Professionals in Nigeria have their separate network referred to as the Young Quantity Surveyors Forum (YQSF). Section 1.3 of Nigeria's Institution of Surveyors 2021 constitution (as amended) recognised the YSN Nigeria as one of its subgroups, hence the activities of the Network are under the oversight of the Office of the Vice President International of the Nigerian Institution of Surveyors (NIS Constitution, 2021).

3. SUCCESSES, CHALLENGES, PROSPECTS, AND SWOT ANALYSES

3.1 Successes Achieved

3.1.1 YSN Nigeria Institutional Capacity as a framework for collaboration

To ensure a smooth take-off, the first step was to set out the corporate culture of the organization through the creation of a written code of conduct. The code of conduct is a valuable resource (YSN Code of Conduct, 2015). Within the organization, it serves as a valuable guidepost, providing direction and simplifying the decision-making process (Bruce, 1996). Outside the organization, it communicates the overall corporate culture of the organization, while setting out its aims, objectives, and general principles. It helps to outline the standards of behavior expected from both leaders and followers and remains a yardstick by which outcomes can be measured (Jorge, 2015). YSN Nigeria adopted the FIG YSN terms of reference in 2013 by drafting a Code of Conduct (YSN Code of Conduct, 2015) for its operations aligned with the global recommendation of the FIG YSN to coordinate the activities of the YSN Nigeria nationally and to provide local Networks with the framework to operate within their territories.

Inclusive collaboration was at the central point of creating the document. A committee made up of young surveyors drawn from the length and breadth of the country was responsible for brainstorming and coming up with an acceptable framework, to serve as the basis for operation. It was the first test of collaboration and synergy. Everyone was excited that their contribution was valued and appreciated, therefore, Driven by commitment and the desire to see change, all seeming differences dissolved into the singular connecting factor of being surveyors and since

then, the YSN has built on that structure, ensuring that every region is carried along in the decision making process.

The Code of Conduct makes rules for several factors including membership, paths to membership, leadership, and qualifications for leadership, duties, and functions of leaders as well as expected responses from members (YSN Code of Conduct, 2015). It devolves powers from the National to the regions and even to the States (Figure 1), establishing leadership positions and outlining the functions of each office. The idea is to provide structure, engender a sense of responsibility, and ensure accountability. The general acceptability of the document is considered significant in view of how vast and diverse the Nigerian Surveying landscape is.

3.1.2 Strengthening capacity and professional growth via knowledge sharing

According to Adomi and Uwakwa (2019), “Knowledge sharing is the activity of relating, transferring, imparting, disseminating ideas, facts, information, experiences, skills, strategies by a person / group / organization / community / system to other people / group / organization / community / system”. Sharing knowledge effectively is the foundation on which a strong capacity that stands the test of time is built, whether in individuals or collectively amongst many individuals (Danaher et al, 2014). This not only ensures sustainability but supports the evolution of knowledge. When it comes to synergy, collaboration, and networking, knowledge remains the core resource that is transacted (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). Knowledge sharing systems are both contextual and varied from one organization to the other. Several information transfer vehicles could be utilized but the YSN Nigeria developed a WhatsApp based knowledge sharing system that enables members to access beneficial professional knowledge and information. This informal knowledge sharing technique is a means of enhancing the capacity of members through information exchange and support by other members of the network. That way, the platform is a never ending classroom or laboratory where anyone can ask questions and receive answers in real-time.

Today, The slogan “we share, we grow” has been popularized across YSN, Nigeria, indicating that growth is enhanced when knowledge is shared (YSN Nigeria, 2020). Knowledge sharing has created an environment where healthy competition is thriving. Members are genuinely motivated to reach their goals through natural competition. A good example is a seeming competition between the two largest local networks in Nigeria, the Lagos State Branch (YSN Lagos, 2022), and the FCT branch, which appear to be in a competition to outdo each other in organizing high quality programs, conferences, symposiums, and workshops. This serves as a motivation to other local networks who desire to measure up or do even better. In a healthy competitive work environment, the idea is to better the system and enhance collective growth. That way, everyone is given equal opportunity and a chance to win and celebrates when each other wins. Healthy competition is an excellent source of motivation (Medhi, 2021).

3.1.3. Improved public perception of the surveying profession

Of particular concern was the fact that the Surveying profession was not a very well-known profession. The profession was media shy and relegated to the background and not given its rightful place in the comity of professionals, given its importance to development and

sustainability. The emotion, imagery, and associations a person connects with the profession were neither here nor there. It became necessary to have a well thought out plan for the public to have a positive association with the profession. Beginning in 2016, the campaign to make the YSN and by extension, the surveying profession visible was started. It became mandatory to show the world what the YSN was doing and how beneficial it was to the wider society. Paid adverts, News coverages, and active social media engagements were some tools used to share positive content with the public. It became a consistent practice from every corner of the nation. to say the least, there is a significant shift in public perception as it concerns the Survey profession in Nigeria as a whole, and the activities of YSN, Nigeria in particular

3.1.4 Harvest of Ideas (Conference), Workshops, and other Training

Table 1: National Harvest of Ideas (HOI)/ Conferences held by YSN Nigeria since its inception

HOI	Date	Venue	Theme
1st	24 th – 26 th . November, 2015	Main Bouquet Hall, Hotel Presidential Hotels, Port Harcourts, Rivers State	Dynamic Synergy of Young Professionals Towards National Development
2nd	23rd -25 th . November, 2016	The Summit Event Centre, Alausa, Ikeja Lagos, Nigeria	The role of young surveying professionals towards national economic transformation
3rd	18th -20 th June, 2018	Multipurpose Sports Hall/Command Guest House, Bauchi	Surveying and Mapping for Economic Recovery
4th	30th. Oct. - 1st. Nov., 2019	Royal Shekinah Hotel, Ilorin, Kwara State	Exploring 21 st Century for Sustainability and Self sufficiency
5th	10th -12th November, 2021	Barcelona Hotel, 23 Blantyre Street, Off Aminu Kano Crescent, Wuse 2, Abuja (FCT)	Inspiring Young Surveyors to Secure the Future”.

Other successes recorded are in the area of workshops and conferences. Since its inception, YSN Nigeria had organised five National conferences, hosted in different zones within the country (Table 1). For instance, some noteworthy examples of successes of the YSN in Nigeria.

- i. Strength of National Executive distribution across all geopolitical zones and Leadership structures in various states through rotation of powers and successful handover to a new administration.
- ii. Various Industrial Training/ Internship opportunities, welfare for members, capacity building, SURCON Exams preparatory workshops, Symposiums, Webinars, HOIs, Conferences, and Magazines at national and state levels, etc
- iii. Attracted sponsorship and partnership with other companies for training of members, and our alumni taking over greater responsibilities in the public service
- iv. Harmonization of a database of members, creation of websites in some states, Councillor at NIS Council meetings.
- v. Participation in SURCON retreat and given the mandate to produce ten (10) development plans for the surveying profession.
- vi. The rotation of Harvest of Ideas (our annual and/ or biannual conference) has helped in making inactive states more active especially when such states host the event (Lagos, Kwara, and the Rivers States have been more active since the HOIs were hosted in the states).



Figure 2: Some of the delegate members at the Maiden (1st) YSN Conference, held in Rivers, Nigeria in November, 2015



Figure 3: Some of the delegate members at the 2nd YSN Conference, held in Lagos, Nigeria in November, 2016.



Figure 4: Some of the delegate members at the 3rd YSN Conference, held in Bauchi, Nigeria in June, 2018.

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Figure 5: Some of the delegate members at the 4th YSN Conference, held in Kwara State, Nigeria in November, 2019.



Figure 6: Some of the delegate members at the 5th YSN Conference, held in Abuja, Nigeria in November, 2021

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3.2 Challenges the YSN Nigeria is Facing

3.2.1 Inability to create Synergy with other member divisions of the FIG

The Membership of the FIG YSN in Nigeria cuts across young professionals subgroups of three major professional bodies, namely the Nigerian Institution of Surveyors (NIS), The Nigerian Institute of Quantity Surveyors (NIQS), and the Nigerian Institute of Estate Surveyors and Valuers (NIESV). This inter-professional cooperation is an advantage that if utilized has the potential to solve a variety of problems and complex issues.

According to Green and Johnson, (2015), Participants in an inter-professional cooperation tend to achieve more when they collaborate together than when they act individually. However, the YSN, Nigeria currently comprises only YS from the Nigerian Institution of Surveyors. Several attempts to create synergy and integrate with YS from the other two divisions remain a challenge.

Several reasons have been adduced to this seeming anomaly

- i. Lack of proper communication: it is believed that a proper communication channel has not been developed to enhance a link between the bodies. As a result, they continually function as distinct and autonomous networks
- ii. Unwillingness to cooperate: so far, the NIS YS division appears to have an overwhelming population in comparison with the other two divisions. In some instances, it is assumed that the NIS division appears to be large in number due to the fact that they have a well-organized structure whereas the other divisions do have a structure that is quite different.
- iii. Already functioning YSN (NIS) Division: the YSN NIS division appears to be fully functional and tailored to serve the needs of only the NIS division. This appearance is not without basis. It is believed that at inception, the YSN was formed at an Annual General Meeting of the NIS, without recourse to the other two divisions. Also, the Code of conduct created is tailor made only for YS in the NIS division. These seem to be an impediment which makes YS from the other divisions reluctant to form a synergy but attempts to create their own YS divisions.

3.2.2 The Delicate balance of leadership

Currently, the YSN Nigeria operates what is known as “the wheel of progress”. This wheel signifies rotational leadership amongst the Six Geopolitical regions of Nigeria. The original idea was to promote inclusiveness and give everyone an equal opportunity to lead. It has been listed as a challenge because there is a growing agitation for its abrogation. There are those who believe it deprives the YSN of qualitative leadership and there are others who believe the leadership of the YSN ought to be truly democratic where the winner takes it all. The problem this presents is the fact that awareness of the Survey profession is varying across the regions. There are regions like the South West and South East whose knowledge and participation in Surveying matters has spanned decades while there are those who even though the Surveying profession has survived for decades, it was firmly controlled by civil servants. So in the former,

there is a large number of surveyors from those regions, while fewer surveyors hail from the latter regions.

The argument remains that if the wheel of progress is abrogated, the leadership of the YSN will perpetually emanate from one region, while other regions may have no opportunity to lead. The other school of thought is that if the wheel is maintained and a region is mandated to lead, the leading region may have no leader of quality to lead and therefore deprive a potential leader from another region because leadership is zoned elsewhere.

3.2.3 Financial constraints and membership Participation Apathy in some regions

Firstly, there have been financial constraints bedevilling the Network from the National to State levels; these hinder the execution of some of its volunteering and other training activities which need financial commitments. The network mostly depends on its parent body (NIS) for the sponsorship of most of its activities.

Secondly, there has been apathy in participation in the network's activities by members from some zonal and state branches of the network. Likewise, there is a lack of awareness about the network and its goal in some zones. This is also synonymous with a lack of initiative from some executives hindering them from being responsible in the offices they occupy.

Thirdly, there are also cases of unrealistic demands from members and unwillingness to volunteer in some roles, and lack of commitments without taking responsibilities- clout chasing. Moreover, growing through the cadre is sometimes difficult.

3.3 Prospects and Expectations

3.3.1 Power to influence policy both locally and nationally

A well organized and functional YSN has the potential to influence policymaking and bring about changes that are beneficial to the Surveying profession and far reaching to society in terms of development and sustainability. Facts based policy making remains the best for positive growth. The YSN has the potential for advocacy, to influence policy and mitigate the dangers that arise from policies made for political expediency or policies made from faulty facts.

Bridgman and David (2004) believe that policy making is a convoluted process that goes through complex interactions and negotiations between and amongst stakeholders, including politicians, interest groups, advisers, bureaucrats, and a range of other actors. It is important to note that the YSN, in its fully functional form has the potential to position itself as a major stakeholder in National development and sustainability.

3.3.2 Effective Leadership and an assured future

Nelson Mandela is commonly quoted as having said "The youth of today are the leaders tomorrow". One of the core goals of the YSN is to expose members to the rudiments of leadership.

It is common knowledge that the reins of leadership are gradually changing hands. It is therefore clear that the YSN has the potential to forge leaders in its rank that will provide leadership at a higher level and thus ensure the continued survival and sustenance of the profession of

Surveying. Within the ranks of the YSN are youths who are energetic, endowed with enthusiasm and revolutionary thoughts, and desirous of social change. Young people are branded as “partners of today.” And if they learn how to be effective partners today they can truly assume the role of effective leaders tomorrow Oturo (2017).

3.3.3 Avenue for Mentorship amongst other benefits

There will be a reformed leadership from youthful members by injecting new ideas, and new approaches to doing things. There will also be a positive influence on the society by the network’s large number volunteering for the development of communities.

It will serve as a great avenue for mentorship of the upcoming generation of young surveying professionals. For Example, the just inaugurated Mentee/Mentor Pilot programme by African Regional Network (ARN) and FIG YSN and the Catch them young workshops organised for Secondary School Students.

It will also leverage youthfulness with strength, energy, and enthusiasm otherwise known as maximization of youthfulness, thereby building synergy and inter/intra-professional networks.

3.4 SWOT Analyses of YSN Nigeria

Table 2: SWOT analyses of the attributes of the Members of YSN

S/N	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
1	Youthfulness and energy	Lack and/or insufficient capital and structure to establish survey firms and companies	Abundant landmass to prosper	Quackery in the profession and encroachment into the profession by other non-certified surveyors
2	Enthusiasm in carrying out tasks	Inability to meet certain job experience and requirements	Relatively up-to-date in knowledge and skills	
3	IT and technology compliant	Unfavourable business environment	Professional networking and sharing ideas	The bottleneck to excel at a younger age
4	A large number of members	Inability to enact policies	Equal representatives from different regions/zones for healthy competition	Bribery and corruption, inability to influence policy and decision making positively

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5	Members cut across other subgroups, specialisations, and expertise		A seat as NIS Councillor, and SURCON Mandate,	Non-interest in the profession by a large number of secondary school leavers, a high percentage of unemployment,
6	Diversity and inclusion		Alumni/face out members occupying positions in societies	difficulty in doing private practice in some regions and APPSN/Lecturers tussles,

From Table 2, if the strength and opportunities are well utilised and the weakness and threats surmounted, the Network should be stronger especially when it identifies its strategic short-term, mid-term and long-term planning goals; project its progress in the near future, and manage and enhance its leadership styles.

4.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper has reported the successes, challenges, and prospects of YSN Nigeria. Looking forward to more surveyors joining the YSN-Nigeria. The authors welcome the opportunity to share more information about YSN-Nigeria with all other countries. On the other hand, YSN Nigeria had already set up a code of conduct review committee and the committee has started work. They are to carry out duties using the terms of reference provided to them. The NIS can put a policy in place that will encourage sponsorship of YSN members at the State level in terms of its activities.

We are equally recommending an establishment of a NIS Foundation grant to help sponsor YSN members and students to attend NIS AGMs and other events just like it's being done at FIG. This could be coordinated by the office of the VP International. Contrarily, some non-active Young Surveyors bypass the NIS and YSN to get FIG grants while the hardworking and active ones are left behind.

Conclusively, FIG-YSN should collaborate/partner with the local YS bodies in different countries to enhance its growth.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Adamu Bala

Adamu Bala is the incumbent National Secretary of the FIG Young Surveyors Network (YSN) in Nigeria. He has been a member of the Network for about a decade and had previously served as the National Communication Officer, Northwest Zonal Coordinator, and Katsina State Coordinator of the YSN. Surveyor Bala is Registered as a Surveyor with the Surveyors Council of Nigeria and an active member of some professional bodies including the Nigerian Institution of Surveyors (NIS), FIG Young Surveyors Network (YSN), National Association of Surveying & Geoinformatics Lecturers (NASGL), amongst others. He has a passion for participation in professional associations activities, sharing knowledge, and meeting new friends and professional colleagues. Surveyor Bala is a Lecturer in the Department of Geomatics at the Ahmadu Bello University (A.B.U.), Zaria, Nigeria, where he teaches courses such as Professional Practice and also encourages his students to participate and become more active in the activities of Surveying professional bodies.

Ryan Keenan

Dr. Keenan is currently co-Chair of FIG Commission 5's Working Group 4 on 'GNSS', Chair-Elect of FIG Commission 5 Positioning and Measurement, and a member of the FIG Asia Pacific Capability Development Network (AP CDN). He is also a member of two UN-GGIM Subcommittees on Geodesy Working Groups – ETCB, and OC, a member of the UN-GGIM Private Sector Network (PSN), and a Co-Project Lead on ISO/TC20/SC14/WG1 Space systems. As Principal Consultant at Positioning Insights in Melbourne Australia, Dr. Keenan provides bespoke advisory services to public and private sector organisations around the world, on how satellite- and terrestrial-based positioning technologies can be best applied to overcome challenges in sectors.

Otobong Udom Nse

Otobong Udom Nse has served as State Coordinator YSN, Akwa Ibom State Branch, National Secretary, YSN, Nigeria and is currently the Chair, YSN Nigeria. He is a Registered Surveyor and the Managing Partner at Bethesda Geo-Design Consult, a company that provides Surveying and Town planning services. He is also the branch Secretary of the Nigerian Institution of Surveyors, Akwa Ibom State Branch. He is passionate about problem solving through collaboration and synergistic relationships. He is also passionate about influencing policy making through advocacy.

David Elegbede

David Elegbede is the Communication Officer for YSN Nigeria and the Vice-Chair of the FIG Young Surveyors African Network. He is also the Lead for the FIG Volunteer Community Surveyor Program in-country deployment path. He has previously served as Publicity Secretary for YSN Lagos State Branch and in some committees of the NIS Lagos State Branch. He is a Registered Surveyor and the Lead Project Surveyor for GEOSYS Nigeria Limited, a survey firm based in Lagos Nigeria. His professional interest is focused towards Land management, Humanitarian and Environment management.

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