

INTRODUCTION

The Nigeria French Language Village is an Inter-University Centre for French Language Studies, located along the Lagos-Seme highway, in the coastal and historical city of Badagry.

The Village is located in Ajara-Badagry, about 50 kilometres away from Lagos. Indeed the French Village is 15 kilometres to Seme, the border town between the Federal Republic of Nigeria and Benin Republic.

The proximity of the Village to Benin Republic is an added advantage in terms of the availability of Francophone junior workers and periodic international excursions. It also offers the Village the much-needed human contacts with the francophone culture and the French Language.

The Nigeria French Language Village came into existence in 1992. It was established as a result of the economic recession of the 1980s in Nigeria, which made it more difficult for the country to send students of French in our Universities and Colleges of Education to Francophone countries for the mandatory French Language Immersion (year abroad) Programme.

In 1988, the then Federal Minister of Education, Professor Jubril Aminu, set up a Committee that was saddled with the task of carrying out feasibility studies on the establishment of Centres for the active teaching and learning of French, Arabic and Nigerian Languages. His successor, Professor Babatunde Fafunwa took giant strides towards the establishment of the Nigeria French Language Village.

On Monday, December 16, 1991, the Government of Lagos State officially handed over to the Federal Government, the site and the infrastructures of the former “Teacher Training College”, which it had earlier renovated for that purpose. On January 6, 1992, the Nigeria French Language Village received its pioneer batch of undergraduate students.

The Government of Nigeria provides funds for infrastructural and Library development, as well as staff recruitment and payment of staff salaries.

The Village, as it is usually called, has been designed as a centre to replicate the realities of a francophone environment from both linguistic and socio-cultural perspectives. The strategy is to create an ambiance akin to that of the French-speaking countries where Nigerian students used to have their year abroad programme.

In the Nigeria French Language Village, French is the lingua franca: studies, leisure activities, and appointments with friends as well as interactions with the staff are all manifest in French. Everything is put in place to enhance a pragmatic and natural way of teaching and learning French.

BROADENING THE SCOPE OF OUR SERVICES

The Village has broadened the scope of its training programmes. Over the years, this institution has become the reference point for French teaching and learning not only for undergraduates of French studies in Nigerian Universities and Colleges of Education, but also for all those who are desirous of learning French out of personal interest or as added value to their profession. Thus, individuals, Secondary School Students, Teachers, Professionals, etc. are encouraged to avail themselves of the facilities and training opportunities available in the Village.

1.1. FRENCH LANGUAGE AND NATIONAL POLICY DIRECTIVES

In 1992, the Village came under the ambit of the National Universities Commission (NUC) and got linked to the Nigerian University system. Ever since, this centre has lived up to its bidding as a strategic government institution, in the articulation of policy-directives in areas where the French language is an indispensable component.

In this era of globalisation, mastery of French is, more than ever before, a pre-requisite to economic advancement and regional integration. Globalisation also entails bridging communication gap, which underlines the importance of languages as means of communication among peoples.

It would be recalled that French, was declared the second official language in Nigeria in 1997. It is the desire of the Village that, all Nigerians will be equipped with the skill to express themselves in French, in order to become active players on the international scene.

The Nigeria French Language Village identifies with the Federal Government policy enshrined in the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) which places premium on education as an important transforming tool for the socio-economic empowerment of Nigerians.

1.2 PARTNERSHIP WITH FRANCOPHONE NETWORK

The Nigeria French Language Village represents the boldest Nigerian symbol of universal cooperation in education delivery. The Village, through its Academic Staff, is a member of Regional Network of French Language Centres in Africa (REFLCA) and University French Teachers' Association of Nigeria (UFTAN).

As the nation's Inter-University centre for French studies, the Nigeria French Language Village is in direct relationship with Universities and degree-awarding institutions, as well as Colleges of Education where French is offered in Nigeria.

1.3 COOPERATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF FRANCE

Yearly, the French Government through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation makes credit provisions for documentation and equipment in the Village. This has tremendously enhanced the Village holdings in terms of relevant books and other pedagogical materials and ICT back-up.

In addition, the French Government offers scholarships for the training of Lecturers and Librarians in “*Centre de Linguistique Appliquée de Besançon*” in France.