



Benjamin O. Kalu Esq.

Bende Federal House of Representatives
Candidate of APC

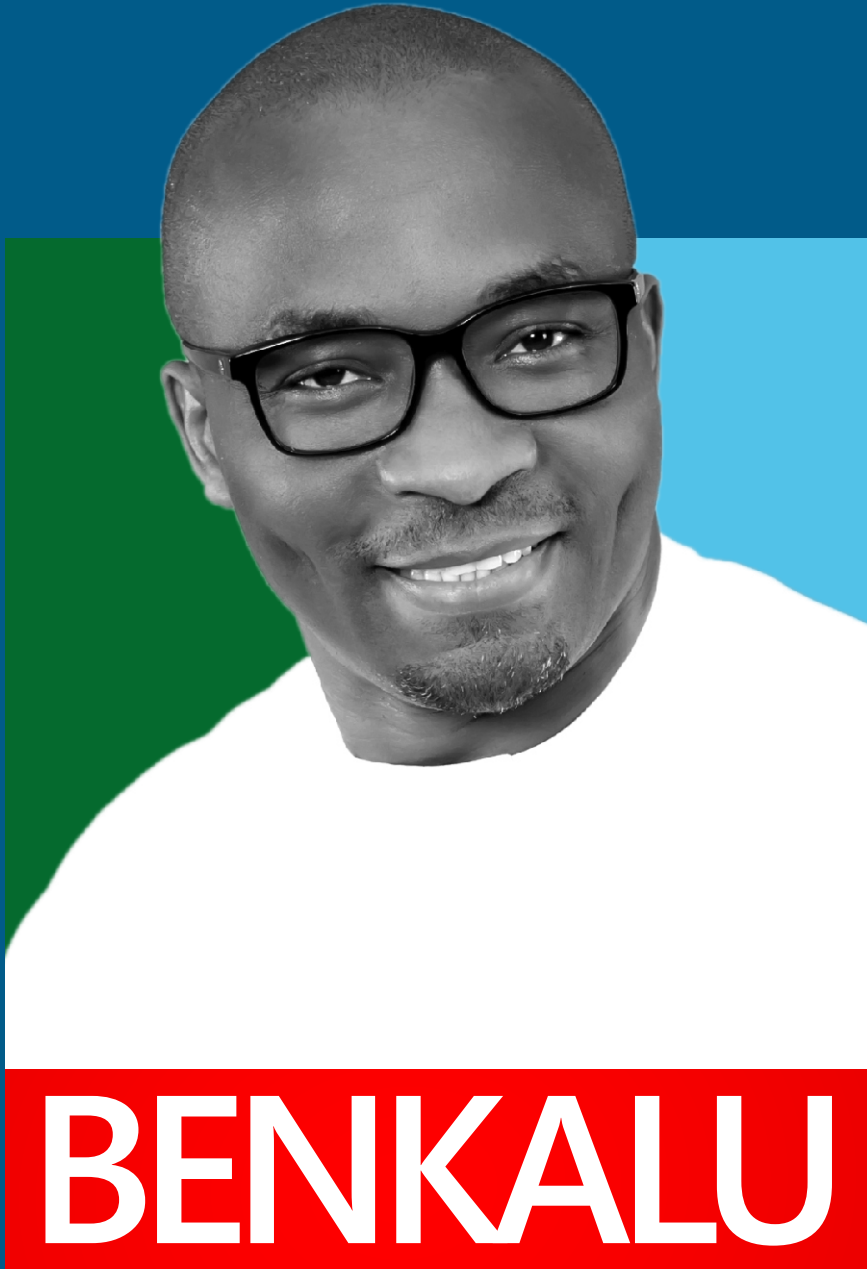


MANIFESTO (ABRIDGED)



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INTRODUCTION

My name is Benjamin Okezie Kalu, more popularly known as Ben Kalu. I was born on May 5, 1971 and hail from Agbamuzu, Bende.

I had my primary school education in Bende. I attended Wilcox Memorial Comprehensive Secondary School in Aba, Abia State after which I studied Law at the University of Calabar, graduating with an LL.B. degree in 1998. I also acquired an MBA, Business Administration from the Oxford Brookes University, UK in 2006 and a Master of Laws (LL.M) degree in Petroleum Taxation and Finance from the University of Dundee in 2012 as well as a Diploma in International Commercial Arbitration from the University of Oxford, UK. After my return to Nigeria, I was called to the Nigerian Bar, after completing the qualifying program at the Nigerian Law School, Enugu Campus and did the statutory National Youth Service (NYSC) in the 2010/2011 service year in Agwu, Enugu State.

I am the Principal Partner at Silk Partners LLP, a successful law practice in Lagos State. I also own several thriving businesses at home and abroad, including Bende Export Limited, Ozbok Business Services Limited, Pouvoir Energy Limited, B.Kalicia Services LTD, Solcarbon SA (Belgium), FS Energy (Belgium), GSC SA (France), Bende Trading and Investment Australia PYT Ltd., Ozbok General Trading LLC UAE, King Coal Namibia Ltd. and Bende Trading UK Ltd.

My contributions to nation building began at a very young age. At 23, I was a student representative in the University of Calabar. At 29, I was the National Chapter Chairman of PDP in diaspora with six provincial branches under my office. At 31, I was the youngest chairman of Bende, the oldest and largest undivided local government area in Nigeria with 99 autonomous communities. At 34, I was a member of the Abia Executive cabinet as the Senior Special Adviser to the Executive Governor on Local Government and Chieftaincy affairs. At 35, I was the Senior Special Adviser to the Executive Governor of Abia State on Millennium Development Goals and international relations.

Driven by an unyielding passion and commitment to community building, I founded the Benjamin Kalu Foundation, a non-governmental organization committed to building the communities that build the nation and that

has executed several projects to help the indigents and less privileged ones in rural Nigeria.

I am happily married to Dr. Ezinne Kalu and we are blessed with four beautiful children.

So, you see, I am not a career politician. I am not in this race to acquire wealth or fend for my family. I am not a politician who is driven by the politics of compromise and self-interest calculated to protect a political career. I am a citizen of the community passionate about transforming Bende and committed to playing my part to make this a reality with integrity and excellence. It is for this reason that I aspire to represent the Bende Federal Constituency as a member in the Federal House of Representatives.

This election allows Bende an opportunity to enjoy a breath of fresh air, a restoration of hope and a change for the better. It is about putting Bende on the map. It is about achieving the urbanization of Bende communities. It is about attracting Federal government presence in Bende, qualitative education, securing public and private sector employment for our Bende youths.

It is about empowering our enterprising rice farmers from Ugwueke, Uzuakoli, Igbere and Ozuitem, the diligent cocoa farmers from itumbauzo and the elegant okra farmers from Ozuitem. It is about the revival of our palm oil mills in Amogwe. It is about increasing the value of the lives of Bende people through functional health care centres, fixing the feeder roads in our communities for the convenience of our farmers and market women and providing support for the education of the children and adults in our communities.

Together, we will witness the actualization of the hopes we have collectively held, and the dreams we have collectively dreamed. We shall witness a change for the better in education, health, agriculture, youth empowerment and the welfare of our elderly, our traditional rulers, the needy and the less privileged in our society. We shall witness the emergence of Bende as a reckonable force in international trade and commerce.

I invite you to this exciting journey of change and progress *maka odinma Bende*.

MY POLITICAL ETHOS



VISION:

My vision is to put Bende on the map; showcasing her needs and announcing her strengths for the purpose of attracting the right partners to attend to her needs and benefit from her strengths.

MISSION STATEMENT:

I will be the eyes, the ears and the voice of Bende people in governance.



PRINCIPLES:

My political philosophy is based on the principles of justice, equity, service and transparency for all with the People Element at the centre of it all.


BENDE




With an area of 601km², Bende is the biggest local government in Abia; a largely agrarian community, with the potential to produce at a commercial scale to feed the nation and also export.



At the widely disputed population census of 2006 the population of **Bende was placed at 192,621 and projected to reach 252,300 in 2016.**



Bende is blessed with fertile, arable land as well as **an abundance of untapped natural resources like Salt, Gold, Phosphate, Laterite Gravel, Lime Stone and even Oil.**



It is one of the three agricultural backbones of Abia state. The people cultivate rice, yam, cassava, coco yam, cocoa, okra, corn and harvest palm oil for commercial and personal consumption.

STRATEGY AND MODE OF REPRESENTATION

The problems of Bende require what I call *innovative leadership*.

Traditionally, the contributions of legislators to their constituencies have been limited to their legislative functions, oversight functions and constituency projects only. I will not allow my contributions to Bende Federal Constituency to be limited to these as I vow to go above and beyond to bring sustainable development home to the people of Bende.



a. Legislating and Oversight

As a trained lawyer, I will propose and support laws and regulations that benefit the people of Bende first. I will also exercise oversight on the executive and all government parastatals to ensure that their policies and actions are in the best interest of the people of Bende and the nation at large.



b. Lobbying and Partnerships

Leverage the very powerful Office of the Representative and all of its accesses and privileges to lobby and attract the right government projects and presence to Bende; Including strategic partnerships with federal and state governments, NGOs, international partners and private investors to foster sustainable development within the constituency and empower the local communities in Bende.



c. Consultative and Interactive Representation

A messenger with a message.

Quarterly town halls open to everyone.

Visible and accessible representation through my proposed two constituency offices in Bende North and Bende South manned by trained local employees as liaison officers.

ISSUES



AGRICULTURE



ISSUE 1: AGRICULTURE

Overview

Agriculture is a major strength of Bende but faces the challenges of

- * lack of affordable loans,
- * lack of improved seedlings
- * lack of infrastructure (including motorable feeder roads for farmers and traders),
- * lack of farming machinery,
- * inadequacy of processing facilities,
- * lack of mechanized farming knowledge.

Farming is still done by families at a subsistence level instead of at a commercial level using mechanized farming.

Objectives

- * Ensure Bende benefits from all relevant government agriculture programs.
- * Stimulate large scale farming and processing, ensuring that Bende becomes a major exporter of agricultural produce.

An Analysis of the Areas for Intervention in Agriculture

1. Bende/Itumbauzo/Ntalakwu

The people here will be supported to develop their cocoa cultivation. The support will include supply of improved varieties of cocoa seedlings. Continuation of the Cocoa Business School. Scouting for more NGOs to buy into Bende cocoa farming.

2. Igbere

Partnering with investors in further development of the vast low land (swamps) which were first developed by the World Bank Rice Project but had been abandoned by the present government. These 1,900 hectares of swamp for rice production stretched from Ozuitem border to Bende along Igwu River and its tributaries and even passing through Bende. Enormous economic potential lies here.

3. Nkpa/Uzuakoli/Umuimenyi

Development of oil mills to capture the processing of large quantities of oil palm fruits produced in this area. This will restore the dilapidated pioneer oil mills in these areas which have been neglected. Rice mills at Uzuakoli will be supported to enlarge their capacities so as to be able to cater for the Ozuitem/Umuhu/Nkpa/Uzuakoli rice producers.

4. Ugwueke/Alayi/Ezeukwu

The two communities possess vast forests filled with oil palm trees though wild. The people's competence in

harvesting and processing oil palm fruits there reveals great economic opportunity, provided there is further investment in improved varieties of oil palm. Therefore, the rural people will be assisted to embark on the improved varieties of the product.

We will attract government intervention in oil palm fruits and rice production. This will include the establishment of modern oil mills for processing the oil palm fruits as the oil mill established by IFAD (International Food for Agricultural Development) is small, old and partly manual. Ugwueke/Alayi/Ezeukwu will be provided at least one rice mill to save the people the distant trips to Uzuakoli and Ebonyi State (Ishiaju, Akaeze) to mill their rice.

5. Item (cassava, oil palm Rice)

The people produce oil palm fruits and cassava in large quantities. Therefore, establishment of medium scale cassava processing centers for cassava, and oil mill for oil palm fruits will be done. The northern part of the clan (Akanu, Okai, and Umuakpa) will also be supported in rice production because of abundant low land (swamp) which they have been unable to utilize due to low resources and poor rice varieties.

6. Umuhu/Ozuitem (Rice, oil palm, cocoa)

These communities produce rice in large quantities along Igwu River basin and Ako/Offiavu low lands. They also produce oil palm in substantial amounts. Each of the communities will get a modern oil mill to help process their palm fruits.

Many farmers in Ozuitem have taken to cocoa production because of their interrelationship with and nearness to Bende Communities. Ozuitem land supports cocoa plants but unfortunately, the large government cocoa field in Ozuitem is being abused. The plan for Bende/Itumbauzo under cocoa production will include Ozuitem.

7. Mechanization

Total mechanization of farming in Bende Federal Constituency is a long-term goal which needs strategic and practicable plans. Therefore, the mechanization will be done in 2 phases. Phase 1 will be the mechanization of swamps and lowland areas where stumps and large trees are non-existent. In Phase 2, mechanization will be introduced in the upland areas where sustained cultivation has occurred and where there are primary forests and few stumps and trees. Tractors, for instance, can work easily and more effectively in such areas.

SOLUTIONS

- 1.** Create and support legislation and policies that encourage modernized large-scale agriculture in Bende.
- 2.** Ensure the setup of a large capacity rice mill for farmers from the Amankalu, Ugwueke, Uzuakoli, Igberere and Ozuitem communities to support the existing rice mill in Uzuakoli through partnerships with private investors.
- 3.** Develop modern oil mills for the Nkpa/Uzuakoli, Umuienyi, Ugwueke, Alayi, Ezeukwu, Item, Umuhu and Ozuitem communities. Ensure the upgrade and expansion of existing mills to accommodate the quantity of products from Bende communities.
- 4.** Provide improved and foreign seedlings for the rice farmers from Igberere, Ozuitem, Nkpa, Uzuakoli, Ugwueke, Alayi, Ezeukwu, Item and Umuhu and for the cocoa farmers from Bende, Itumbauzo and Ntalakwu.
- 5.** Partner with investors to further develop the 1,900 hectares of swamp at Ozuitem/Bende for rice production.
- 6.** Partner with investors to establish commodity markets, post-harvest storage systems and processing centers across the constituency to encourage increased production for consumption, large volume trading and export.
- 7.** Partner with UN and other NGOs to increase agricultural productivity by providing knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment, in line with UN's sustainable development goal to eradicate hunger.
- 8.** Ensure the inclusion of Bende's cassava and rice farming communities in the International Fund for Agricultural Development-Value Chain Development Programme (IFAD-VCDP) which has been working with rice and cassava farmers, processors and marketers from select local governments of six participant states of Anambra, Benue, Ebonyi, Niger, Ogun and Taraba to increase yield and develop a sustainable value chain for the two commodities.
- 9.** Introduce mechanized farming for the rice swamp and upland cassava areas.
- 10.** Set up industrial piggery farming and processing facilities which will employ hundreds of Bende youths.
- 11.** Ensure the entry and participation of Bende in all existing and appropriate Federal Government initiatives and funds for Agriculture.
- 12.** Initiate and leverage partnerships with the Bank of Industry (BOI) and Agricultural Development Program (ADP), to encourage and stimulate the financial lending systems ensuring that micro loans are available and affordable to Bende farmers.
- 13.** Encourage local production of fertilizers and increased access to pesticides.
- 14.** Introduce clusters and sponsor the establishment of more cooperatives for the farmers to enjoy the benefits of scale.
- 15.** Partner with government and private agricultural organizations to train able-bodied youths in modern farming techniques to boost yield.
- 16.** Support the reactivation of the Federal Agriculture Research institute in Bende
- 17.** Support the establishment of the department of Agriculture of one of the universities in Bende.

ISSUE 2: EDUCATION

Overview

Chapter 2, **Section (18)3a** of the Constitution, **in tandem with the Supreme Court's decision in Attorney General of Ondo State & Ors. V. Attorney General of the Federation (2002) 9 NWRL (pt. 772) 222**, through the **Free Universal Basic Education Act, (UBE) 2004**, guarantees the right to free and compulsory primary education and free junior secondary education for all qualified Nigerian citizens.

Yet, Nigeria's literacy rate was a meagre 59.6% in 2015. 65 to 75 million illiterates and 13 million children out of school. Only 40 (poorly performing) secondary schools in Bende

No functional vocational centres
Acute shortage of science and math teachers in the schools. Communities have to pay PTA teachers from their purses.

Objectives

Increase compulsory education from primary to secondary level and free education from junior secondary to senior secondary level.
Increase literacy rate of Bende people.
Increase availability of competent and motivated teachers in Bende.

SOLUTIONS

- 1.** Sponsor an amendment to the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Act increasing the minimum compulsory free education from primary to senior secondary education level for all Nigerian citizens.
- 2.** Support the establishment of more vocational schools and polytechnics around Bende to open up the economy of our people beyond farming.
- 3.** Solve the teacher shortage by ensuring more NYSC corpsers are posted to areas of need in Bende.
- 4.** Set up NYSC fund through BKF to provide accommodation for corpsers and pay corpsers an extra 10k per month for teaching math and science subjects in Bende schools.
- 5.** Set up two skills acquisition centers placed in Bende North and Bende South to provide Bende youths with technical and soft skills and make them employable.
- 6.** Engage qualified and motivated teachers especially Catholic Church reverend fathers to second in all the secondary schools in their area for a fee from the constituency office.
- 7.** Attract scholarship opportunities for Bende students

and undergraduates using the office of the representative and increase BKF's scholarship fund.

- 8.** Establish a Bende Education Centre to reintroduce extra mural classes and evening schools (adult education) funded by the office of the representative.
- 9.** Ensure the Bende Education Centre also serve as an exam and IT centre for NECO, GCE, JAMB and WAEC examinations in Bende.
- 10.** Sponsor the amendment of Nigerian education laws to introduce compulsory computer coding courses in primary and secondary school curricula. This will bolster and reposition Nigeria for the future tech-based economy.
- 11.** Ensuring accessible and affordable schools within every 5km radius in the Constituency.
- 12.** Build public libraries to supplement the privately built ones currently at Igbere, Item and Alayi, and to get NGOs overseas to supply the books and other research materials.
- 13.** Support the massive repair of schools and equipment across Bende to avoid school children learning under leaking roofs or sitting on the floor.

ISSUES



COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY



ISSUE 3: COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

Overview

*The people of
Bende are an
enterprising
people.*

I will:

1. Partner with the Local Government Chairman to establish new ultra-modern markets and improve on existing ones.
2. Consult and engage the community of Amaediaba, Uzuakoli and others to ensure that the Eke Nkpa Market is fixed and restored to full operations to the satisfaction of the concerned communities.
3. Spring up cottage industries to employ Bende youths.
4. Introduce a community friendly micro-finance bank to Bende as a platform to create support and credit facilities for farmers and up-coming entrepreneurs, helping them kickstart their passions.
5. Open more branches of MoneyMore, my credit facility company around Bende to aide SMEs with soft loans.
6. An agro commodity market to showcase the popular Bende Corn (Okaa Bende), Rice Bende, Okra Bende, Cassava Bende, Palm Oil Bende, for large volume buyers and exporters to be built in partnership with the LG chairman and the State Houses of Assembly in a centralized place.
7. Opening up of industrial business parks to assemble and accommodate both service providers and product distributors in one space, to compliment each other and enhance the needed growth.
8. Support and influence the construction and renovation of many rural markets in partnership with the State and LGA.
9. Support and influence the establishment of branches of major commercial banks to assist the daily transactions of farmers and traders.

ISSUES



HEALTHCARE



ISSUE 4: HEALTHCARE

Bende in particular has no functioning healthcare centres or first responder facilities to handle emergencies. Our biggest problems in the health sector include: brain drain, paucity of healthcare centres and lack of maintenance of the existing ones.

Objectives:

1. Increase access to quality healthcare for everyone
2. Increase the presence of qualified health care givers in Bende

Therefore, I will:

1. Attract and advocate for the creation of more healthcare centres in Bende using the power of the Office of the Representative and, ensuring that medical doctors, youth service corpsers etc. are posted to these centers.
2. Partner with NGOs and foreign healthcare organizations such as WHO and Bill & Melinda Gates to setup health clinics in Bende North and South.
3. Increase the frequency of Benjamin Kalu Foundation's health outreaches to the community.
4. Partner with NGOs and foreign healthcare organizations to setup 13 medical emergency/trauma centres across the 13 wards which will be equipped for first response and emergency transportation of critical cases to Federal Medical Centre, Umuahia.
5. Partner with International health organizations to

train and equip 13 indigenes from Bende wards to be employed as Community First Responders (CFRs)

6. Sponsor and support legislation to ensure that at least 13% of the nation's annual budget is dedicated to the health sector, and used to improve the existing healthcare facilities, bringing them to international standards.

7. I will sponsor legislation to reduce the frequency of public office holders travelling out for treatment. Public office holders who travel abroad for medical treatment or procedures must forfeit their medical allowance. This will incentivize the government and other policy makers to prioritize sustainable development of our local healthcare facilities.

I will also support any other legislation aiming to improve our health sector.

8. Sponsor and support legislation to convert the Uzuakoli Leprosy Settlement to a National centre for disease control in the South East for all communicable diseases.

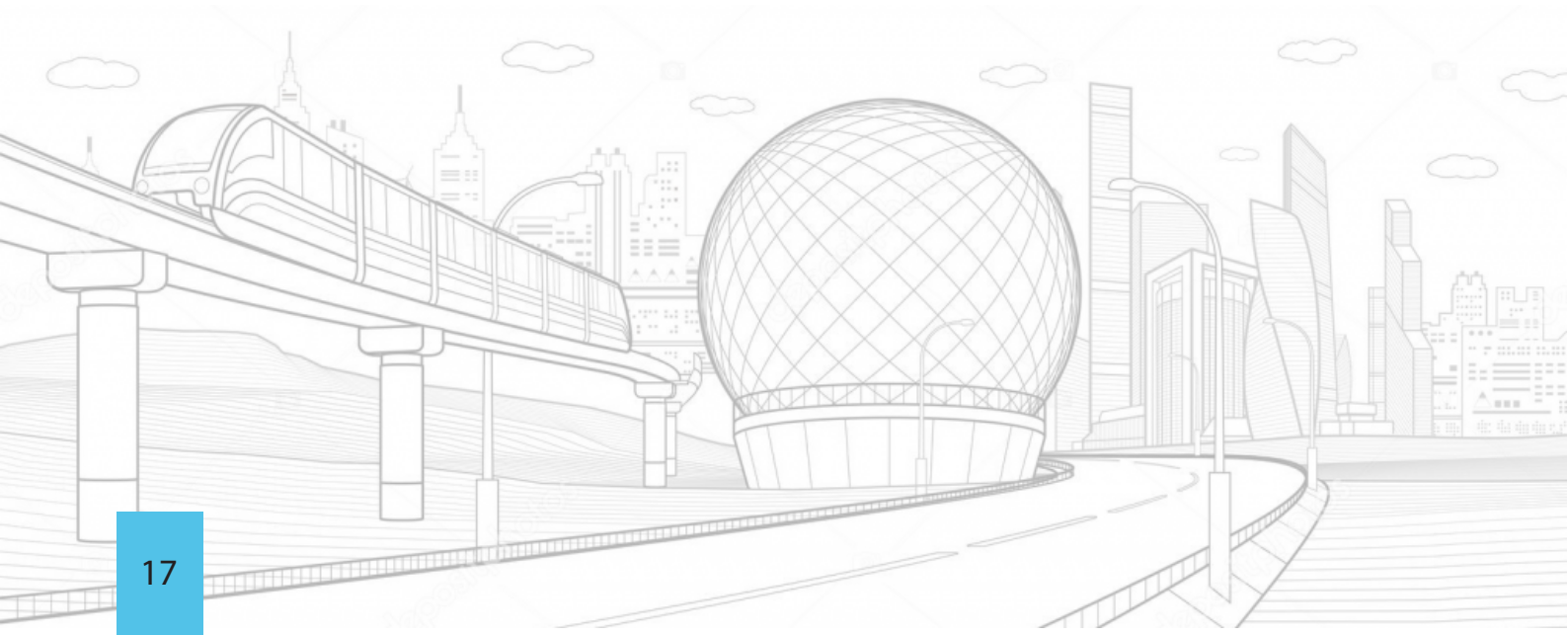
9. Sponsor and support legislation to convert the Amaudo-Itumbauzo Mental Destitute home to a Federal Psychiatric Research Centre for mentally ill persons.

10. Sponsor and support legislation to provide two medical ambulance vans in every political ward in the constituency.

ISSUES



INFRASTRUCTURE



ISSUE 5: INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT, FEDERAL PRESENCE AND URBANIZATION

- 1.** Attract federal institutions to communities in Bende.
- 2.** Partner with the federal government, incoming state government, NDDC and World Bank Community Development Initiatives to construct and fix major roads in the communities.
 - a. Renovate the schools in Amankalu
 - b. Work on the following rural and feeder roads to make them motorable:
 - a. Amankalu-Alayi-Akoli road
 - b. Amankalu-Ozuiem
 - c. Amakwu-Amaokwu road linking Amaekwe
 - d. Agbakoli road
- 3. Nkpa**
construct a new bridge to supplement and eventually replace the current Nkpa bridge.
- 4. Item**
 - a. Liaise with the federal government, the incoming state government, as well as NDDC for the construction of Uzo Rubber.
 - b. Fixing of the feeder roads (Onwusoro road, Elunta feeder road, Ndiobo feeder to Bende, Ogboko-Bende road).
 - c. Work in synergy with World Bank and Anambra-Imo River Basin Authority to ensure the availability of clean water for Item in 2 phases:
 - i. Rehabilitation of the Item water scheme done by Sam Mbakwe.
 - ii. Reticulation of the Item water scheme to serve all 9 communities in Item.
- 5. Alayi**
 - a. Renovate the schools in Amankalu
 - b. Work on the following rural and feeder roads to make them motorable:
 - a. Amankalu-Alayi-Akoli road
 - b. Amankalu-Ozuiem
 - c. Amakwu-Amaokwu road linking Amaekwe
 - d. Agbakoli road
 - 6.** Synergize with the Power Authorities and advocate for the electrification of all rural communities that are currently off-grid.
 - 7.** Introduce solar-powered mobile charging stations across the communities with poor electricity penetration.
 - 8.** Repair of the water stations at Oniyang and Uzuakoli.
 - 9.** Attract more government funded skill acquisition centres across the constituency to train our youths to become employable.
 - 10.** Attract the construction of Itumbauzor/Ntalakwu road up to Akwa Ibom State by the NDDC or Federal Ministry of Works
 - 11.** Ensuring that the Ecological Funds are allocated to fixing Bende erosion menace.

ISSUES



H O U S I N G



ISSUE 6: HOUSING AND SANITATION

The statistics show that the percentage of Bende rural dwellers in thatch and mud houses are still in high numbers compared to those in conducive homes. Many Bende people pass through pains during the rainy season due to the nature of their homes. Shelter is a basic need of man and efforts to alleviate this pain shall be made in this direction.

Secondly, a situation where a family of eight shares a room is totally unacceptable because of the associated health hazards.

Solutions

- 1.** The introduction of low-cost housing by partnering with international NGOs, specialized in building eco-friendly houses with raw materials found in Bende.
 - 2.** Lobbying the Ministry of Housing to allocate a good number of housing projects to Bende.
 - 3.** Ensure that a minimum of 20 residences are built for the down trodden every two years, across the constituency.
 - 4.** Introduce public toilet facilities to be operated by the president of town unions with subventions from the Office of the Representative.
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ISSUES



WELFARE



ISSUE 7: SOCIAL WELFARE

The welfare system in our communities is broken, neglecting the old, the sick and the needy in our local communities. There are no functional homes for orphans, indigents and the elderly who have been abandoned.

My welfare program will;

- 1.** Create functional orphanages and homes for the less privileged
 - 2.** Create Bende's first Old People's Home for the care and nursing of people who are old and have no one to care for them.
 - 3.** Aid indigents in the local communities.
 - 4.** Periodic Food Support Programs to the less fortunate members of our society.
 - 5.** Support the prompt payment of pensions to pensioners.
 - 6.** Aid the movement of the elderly and the LGA through a subsidized transport scheme to be operated by the constituency office.
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ISSUES



T O U R I S M



ISSUE 8: TOURISM, TRADITION AND CULTURE SUPPORT

Bende is a land rich in culture and arts. Furthermore, our traditional leaders who render selfless service to the communities as custodians of our traditions and culture deserve care.

My tourism, tradition and culture support program will:

- 1.** Partner with Abia State government to cater to the traditional leaders in our local communities.
 - 2.** Revamp the annual carnival project I introduced in 2015 to showcase the rich culture and arts of the local communities and attract tourism in Bende.
 - 3.** Ensure a section of the constituency offices houses the arts and history of Bende people with a hall of fame dedicated to celebrating our great ancestors and the living legends who have played a role in the development of Bende.
 - 4.** Make our historical cultural sites attractive for tourists to visit. Eg. The slave trade centres in Bende, the colonial masters' residence and offices, the Omenuko (famous slave trade master) home, the prisons used by the colonial masters, etc.
 - 5.** Supporting avenues that showcase our music, dance, history, culture, entertainment, etc. Including the support and establishment of Bendewood to raise entertainers who promote Bende.
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ISSUES



EMPOWERMENT



ISSUE 9: YOUTH EMPOWERMENT AND SPORTS

The youth are the power house of any society. They are actors in progress or regression and constitute the workforce who execute policies and programs for the betterment of the community. The need to educate, support and empower Bende youths for the modern economy cannot be overemphasized, and is one very close to my heart.

I will;

- 1.** Build a skills acquisition center for the empowerment of young people with profitable skills
 - 2.** Lobby and advocate for job opportunities for Bende youths in both the public and private sectors
 - 3.** Encourage and support participation in sports through the creation of leagues, tournaments and opportunities, like I have always done through the Benjamin Kalu Foundation
 - 4.** Support the building of a strong football academy, a center for training youths professionally for gainful careers in sports
 - 5.** Provide a sustainable mentorship program
 - 6.** Provide a special fund for support and investment in young people in the business of entertainment (music, TV, media, sports, etc.)
 - 7.** An IT centre to teach youths software development and other computer coding courses to make them competitive in the modern employment industry.
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ISSUES



EMPLOYMENT



ISSUE 10: EMPLOYMENT

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- 1.** Create and maintain a modern and comprehensive human resources database of the people of Bende through community leaders and housed at the two constituency offices in Bende North and Bende South. This will serve as a recruitment and services engagement tool for Bende graduates and job seekers.
 - 2.** Leverage on representatives' quota to secure the employment of Bende graduates into federal parastatals.
 - 3.** Lobbying and networking with potential employers of labour in order to showcase our employable youths.
 - 4.** Support the operation of a vocational centre to train tailors, welders, mechanics, carpenters, brick layers, plumbers, electricians, cooks, stewards, etc. to become a hub for the private sector to recruit employees in need of such services.
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ISSUES



SECURITY



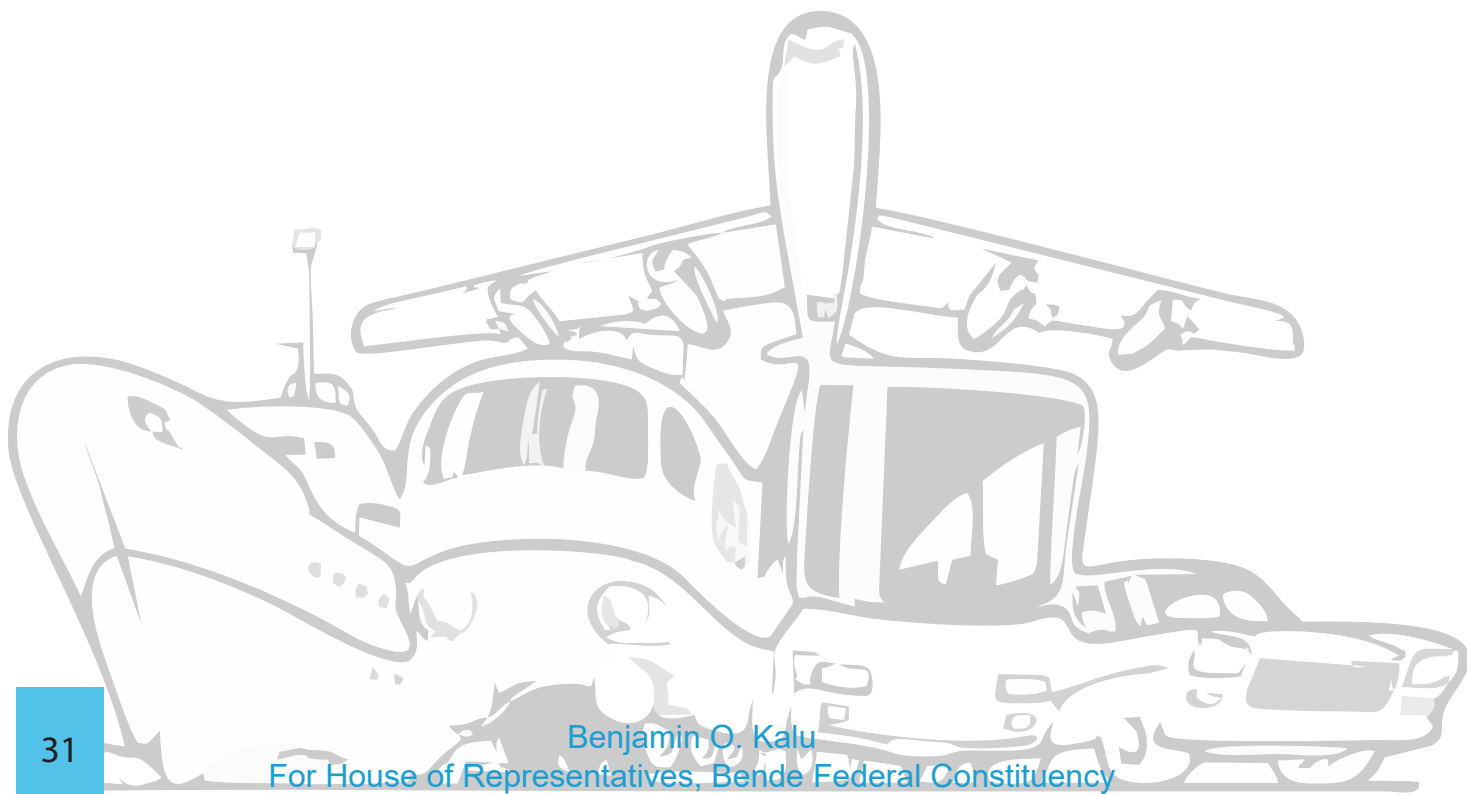
ISSUE 11: SECURITY

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- 1.** Supporting the vigilante groups in the various communities across the constituency by equipping and providing them with motorbikes, uniforms, torches, communication radios, and other security devices.
 - 2.** Partnership with the Police and LG Chairman to ensure improved security in our communities.
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ISSUES



TRANSPORTATION



ISSUE 12: TRANSPORTATION

Commuting from one part of Bende to another has been an issue due to the bad roads and vast nature of the LGA. Also affected by the transportation issues are our farmers and traders who are unable to commute themselves and their goods from one place to another.

Solutions:

- 1.** Provide subsidized buses under a transport scheme. The buses will ply key areas in Bende, transporting people and goods at very subsidized rates.
 - 2.** Provide more motor bikes to ensure access to areas inaccessible to vehicles.
 - 3.** Provide haulage tractors to help farmers in swampy and interior lands in Bende to transport their goods from their farms to their desired markets or processing facilities.
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MY LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

In line with the legislative powers granted a member of the Federal House of Representatives by virtue of Chapter 5, Part 1 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria ("CFRN", "Constitution"), if elected into office, my primary legislative agenda shall be the following:

ISSUE 1: EDUCATION

I will propose and sponsor an amendment to the UBE Act to increase the scope of compulsory free education from a primary school minimum to tertiary level for all Nigerian citizens because I believe that wholesome education is the only way we secure a future for our nation.

I will also sponsor the amendment of Nigerian education laws to introduce compulsory coding courses in primary and secondary school curricula. This will bolster and reposition Nigeria in the future tech-based economy.

ISSUE 2: EMPOWERING INDIGENOUS ENTREPRENEURS AND INNOVATION

a. Venture Fund Corporation (VFC)

I will initiate a bill for the setting up of the Venture Fund Corporation (VFC). Modelled after Singapore's Early Stage Venture Fund (ESVF), the VFC will seed funds with selected venture capital firms (VCs) to invest in indigenous early-stage technology start-ups in specific areas of social impact like renewable energy, food, finance, etc. The VFC funds will be invested on a matching basis and the VCs will have the incentivized option to buy out VFC's share of the fund within 5 years by returning the VFC's capital with interest.

This will stimulate investment in innovation, ensuring that Nigerian entrepreneurs can access adequate capital to innovate and stand a fighting chance in the new economic world order.

b. Crowdfunding Framework

Crowdfunding as an emerging financing method for SMEs as well as creators of innovative ideas, is fast

gaining ground around the world but it is yet to be fully appreciated in the Nigerian market. It is a shame that in 2018, despite having a lending system that kills startups and only favors the wealthy, Nigeria, either through the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) or other regulatory bodies, has no piece of legislation allowing or regulating crowdfunding as a means of raising capital, encouraging innovative business models and building scalable startups. I will ensure that SEC is tasked to speedily provide a regulatory framework for equity and otherwise, crowd funding initiatives.

ISSUE 3: HEALTH CARE

I will sponsor and support legislation to ensure that at least 13% of the nation's annual budget is dedicated to the health sector, and is to be used to improve the existing healthcare facilities, bringing them to international standards.

To reduce the frequency of public office holders travelling out for treatment, I will sponsor legislation mandating that public office holders who travel abroad for medical treatment or procedures must forfeit their medical allowance. This will incentivize the government to prioritize sustainable development of our local healthcare facilities.

I will also support better pay for health care workers as a way of combatting brain drain.

I will also support any other legislation aiming to improve our health sector.

ISSUE 4: CORRUPTION

As a matter of priority, I will sponsor and support legislation giving teeth to the investigative arms of our anti-corruption agencies to ensure wholesome prosecution of corruption charges.

I will also propose and support legislation on assets forfeiture mandating an accused person to prove the legitimacy of the income used to acquire ostentatious property/assets like cars and buildings, etc., or risk forfeiture of such assets.

ISSUE 5: COMMERCE

Export in Nigeria is a huge industry capable of earning well over its \$44,466,366,757 income from last year, 2017. However, certain challenges still affect ease of international trade.

I will support policy and legislation:

1. To enhance the effectiveness of the existing Export Expansion Grant (EEG) from the Nigerian export proceeds of CBN.
2. Reducing the complexity and bureaucracy of processes and documentation at the Nigerian Ports for Nigerian exporters.
3. To allow the establishments of mini ports around Lekki axis, Lagos as a way to decongest the roads to the port and the ports themselves thereby ensuring ease of trade.
4. To establish export desks manned by trained personnel in all current and potential trading partner countries across the world.

ISSUE 6: PRISON REFORM

The prison system in Nigeria is in urgent need of reform. There are over 75,544 prisoners in Nigeria and the government currently spends N14,000 per day to feed a prisoner. Every year, billions are spent on prisoners without any reasonable form of prisoner rehabilitation and preparation for seamless reintegration into the society upon their release. This is a waste of financial resources and the manpower of the prison population.

Our prisons are not as resourceful as they should be. They should be properly managed and the manpower therein maximized to greatly contribute to Nigeria's GDP instead of being avenues to waste money.

I will sponsor and support legislation to ensure that the prison system is privatised (as applies in other

developed nations). The new prison systems will be run by private companies wherein the government shall hold substantial shares (49%). Under this system, privately run prisons will put the prisoners to work in a way that rehabilitates them, equipping them with the right skillset for reintegration into society, as well as generating income for the government and private sector.

ISSUE 7: VOTING RIGHTS

It is estimated that about 116 countries have a system that allows their emigrants to fully participate in their electoral process through external voting. According to globalirish.ie, in a "2006 study of countries that allow their emigrants to vote included: 21 African nations, 13 North and South American countries, 15 Asian countries, 6 Pacific countries, and 36 European countries."

Diaspora Voting Rights are rights long past due. Nigerians in diaspora contribute to the Nigerian economy. Their ability to vote ensures their investment in nation building as well as solves the issue of brain drain. Nigerians abroad should be encouraged and allowed to elect the leaders they wish to create the country that they desire.

I will support an amendment to the constitution to give Nigerians in diaspora the right to vote and participate in elections.

Also, nation building is a collective effort, requiring the active participation of citizens in the election of their leaders. As a means of encouraging patriotism and nation building, I shall support and sponsor legislation for the establishment of mandatory voting of all Nigerian citizens resident in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

This is the beginning of a new era for the people of Bende. A new vista where Bende becomes a beacon on the world stage. Together, with God by my side, and the beautiful people of Bende solidly behind me, we shall take the world and it will be well for all of Bende.

I ask for your support in this project maka odinma Bende.

God bless you, God bless Bende and God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Ben Brings
The Best...



Benjamin O. Kalu
For House of Representatives, Bende Federal Constituency