

Senator Dr. Abubakar Bukola Saraki, CON

Dr. Abubakar Bukola Saraki is the President of the 8th Senate and Chairman, National Assembly of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. He is currently serving a second term as Senator representing Kwara Central.

Governor of Kwara State (2003 to 2011)

Before his election to the Nigerian Senate in 2011, he had previously been twice elected as the Governor of Kwara State, North Central Nigeria, for a period of eight years. During his tenure as Governor, Dr. Saraki transformed many aspects of Kwara State and delivered major reforms for the benefit of its citizens.

· Reforming Nigeria's agriculture

In his first term as Governor, Dr. Saraki made one of the most revolutionary moves to reform agriculture in Nigeria when he invited 14 displaced farmers from Zimbabwe to set up commercial agriculture business in Kwara State under his flagship *Back-To-Farm* Program.

During Dr. Saraki's tenure as Governor, he achieved the following:

- o Creation of 50,000 new jobs in agriculture by attracting private investors
- o Kwara developed the Shonga Farms Agriculture Programme which produces 10,000 litres of milk and processes 10,000 birds for poultry daily
- o Kwara doubled maize and increased rice and cassava production by 2000 percent
- o The State created the Crop Outgrowers Scheme contracting independent farmers and guaranteeing a market for their crops
- o Creation of 1,000 jobs in the fishing industry and vocational training for 300 youths by establishing the Fish Farm Training Centre

· Transforming Education

Dr. Saraki delivered the following improvements to Kwara's education:

- o 100 percent enrolment into primary schools, increased from 78 percent in 2006
- o A textbook for every child in school
- o Doubling of pass rates in primary school examinations from 24 percent in 2006 to 49 percent in 2009 and secondary schools improved from 32 percent in 2007 to 5 percent in 2009
- o The ratio of pupils per classroom decreased from 76:1 in 2003 to 32:1 in 2009, providing better access to education for children
- o School retention rates have improved from 72 percent in 2006 to 95 percent in 2009
- o Kwara is the leading state in Nigeria for teacher training reform through its College of Education which implemented the first ever Teachers Development Needs Assessment in 2008

He also established the state university, the Kwara State University in Malete; the Kwara Aviation College for training of commercial pilots which has produced over 50 commercial pilots; and laid the foundation for a Vocation Centre to award internationally rated certification in skills and vocations.

His period as Governor was also remarkable as a time of rapid transformation of the state from a civil-service state to a state that is recognized as a favourite destination for higher education.

· Improving Kwara's medical services and health infrastructure

He established the Kwara International Diagnostic Centre as one of the earliest efforts to reverse medical tourism in the country and launched various programs to reduce maternal and child mortality in the State, including the *Malaria-Free Kwara* that delivered more than a million Insecticide Treated Nets (ITN) and combination therapy drugs to women and children.

During his period as Governor, the following reforms were instituted:

- o Kwara State now provides free healthcare to all children under the age of five and pregnant women
- o Kwara State developed the first-ever Community Health Insurance Scheme for individuals for only N300 per year. The scheme, in partnership with the Dutch Charity Pharm Access, won the Financial Times/International Finance Corporation award for improving access to primary healthcare in rural regions.
- o Kwara eradicated Polio through a State-wide immunization programme
- o Kwara State refurbished 7 general hospitals and is refurbishing 100 primary health care centres
- o Through the establishment of the State Agency for Control of AIDS, the rate of HIV/AIDS reduced from 2.8% in 2003 to 1.8% in 2008.

· Infrastructure: Meeting housing need

Improving Kwara's infrastructure was a central part of Dr. Saraki's policy reforms during his time as Governor. His major achievements include the following:

- o Built 1,551 new homes including providing affordable housing for the first time since 1981

- o Encouraged public/private partnerships with real estate developers, leading to the construction of housing estates in both the State Capital and rural communities
- o Reformed land ownership to facilitate acquiring Certificate of Occupancy
- o Supported commercial real estate through the refurbishment of hotels and development of office space
- o Re-designed key market areas in the State capital; enhancing commerce for small-scale traders

· **Infrastructure: Electricity and Power**

Dr. Saraki introduced major reforms to improve access to power in Kwara State, including building secure and reliable electricity for the future which is sustainable by investing in bio-fuel ethanol production:

- o Virtually all communities in Kwara State now have access to electricity.
- o As a result of the Governor's successful accomplishments, Kwarans now benefit from 18-22 hours of uninterrupted power.
- o The Kwara State Government took over and built the 330KV Ganmo Transmission Station connecting Kwara to the National Electricity Grid, increasing power outage from 49 mega watts to 300 mega watts
- o Kwara State invested in the installation of 725 transformers and built 7 new number 15MVA substations

· **Infrastructure: Access to Water**

Access to safe water was transformed during Dr. Saraki's time as Governor, in which he:

- o Provided water in all 193 wards across Kwara State
- o Reduced the distance to accessible water for all to 1Km from 5Km in 2003
- o Increased the amount of functioning boreholes from 90 in 2003 to 2,028 in 2010 across all rural communities in Kwara
- o Increased water treatment at Asa Dam from 4 million gallons in 2003, to 25.5 million gallons in 2010 in the State capital
- o Refurbished all 64 waterworks and built an additional 28 new water facilities across the State
- o Advanced the satellite mapping exercise of water resource locations across the State

· **Implementing good governance**

His time as Governor was also a period when issues of good governance were beginning to gain grounds in the country. He was one of the first governors to establish an office for Price Intelligence and Due Process in government procurements as well as a Project Monitoring Unit to ensure value for money.

· **Chair of the Nigerian Governors' Forum**

In his second term as Governor, Saraki was unanimously elected by his colleagues across political party divides as the Chairman of the Nigeria Governors Forum (NGF) – an association of State Governors in Nigeria.

· **Elevating the status of the NGF**

His period as Chairman is easily remembered as the golden era of the NGF in the country. Acting together, governors were able to enforce the true spirit of Nigeria's Federalism by ensuring that Federal policies reflect state interests. NGF also made several critical interventions in the affairs of the nation. The most crucial perhaps, would be in 2010 when the NGF facilitated the adoption of the 'Doctrine of Necessity' that enabled the National Assembly to pronounce then Vice President Goodluck Jonathan as the Acting President, after the protracted absence of then President Umaru Yar'adua from the country as a result of ill health. This intervention by the NGF saved the country from a major constitutional crisis.

· **Supporting Nigeria's States**

His time as Chairman of NGF saw the introduction and adoption of Peer Review Mechanisms (PRM) for states as well as knowledge and experience sharing. He also mobilised significant donor

collaboration and support from several international development agencies working in the country, across governance, education, and health issues, especially on the issue of polio eradication, on which he worked closely with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to deliver the *Immunisation Leadership Challenge*, which was a radical program designed to reward States that made significant improvements in polio and routine immunization. Bill Gates praised the initiative, stating that “*Nigeria’s leaders are critical to making Nigeria polio-free and their renewed confirmation...will make an important difference.*”

Prior to this initiative there was no formal means to directly engage with the states to properly implement polio-eradication programme, and the results can be seen in the fact that Nigeria is close to being certified as a polio-free country. It is to Dr. Saraki’s credit that governors across political parties worked closely together and developed a shared vision under his leadership.

Senator for Kwara Central

In his first term as Senator of the Federal Republic, Saraki was appointed the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Environment and Ecology, while also serving in the Senate Committees on Capital Markets and Finance.

Chair of the Senate Committee on Environment and Ecology

Saraki’s leadership of the Senate Committee on Environment and Ecology set the pace for international legislative cooperation and diplomacy in sharing knowledge on global environmental governance. In 2012, he was appointed into the Leadership council of the Global Alliance for Clean Cook-stoves, an initiative of the United Nations Foundation that aims to use public-private partnerships to create a thriving global market for clean cook-stoves and fuels for over 100 million people by 2020. His appointment into the Leadership council alongside world leaders like Hillary Clinton, Mary Robinson, Mitchell Bachelet and Kofi Annan, put a spotlight on Nigeria in the global scheme of addressing desertification, deforestation, forest conservation and reduction in black carbon emission. In 2013, Senator Saraki also established GLOBE Nigeria as an affiliate of the Global Legislators Organisation (GLOBE International); thereby setting the legislative platform for a critical mass of Legislators that would promote and advance environment and sustainable development laws in Nigeria. He currently serves as the pioneer President of GLOBE Nigeria.

A reformer and promoter of Nigerian enterprise

As Senator, Saraki has campaigned extensively on health, food security, education and the environment. He has also campaigned for the reform of the oil industry, and has argued for the urgent need to strengthen laws relating to the clean-up of oil spills and issues of compensation to communities affected by spills. His National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency Amendment (NOSDRA) Bill seeks to ensure that oil companies pay appropriate levels of compensation to communities affected by oil spills. Since 2013, he has also been active on the issue of Lead Poisoning crisis in the mining areas of Zamfara State as well on the initiative for the *Great Green Wall* to combat desertification and climate change.

He is also a member of the Nigerian Alliance for Clean Cookstoves’ Leadership Council, from where he facilitated widespread access to investment and financing opportunities for Nigerian enterprises, and a National Testing Centre to advance the country’s clean cookstoves and fuel sectors.

Tackling corruption in the oil industry

For all his legislative activities between 2011 and 2015, perhaps what Saraki would be most remembered for was his intervention on the issue of management of spiralling subsidy payments on petrol. In September 2011, he moved a motion calling on the Senate to investigate the Federal Government’s financing of fuel subsidy, which at the time had exceeded the budgeted amount by almost 100 per cent, thereby setting in motion the process that led to exposing one of the most humongous acts of political corruption in Nigerian history. Dr. Saraki uncovered an illegal fuel subsidy expenditure of \$10 billion (about N2 trillion), while the National Assembly had budgeted N240bn for fuel subsidy that year. N550b was subsequently recovered from marketeers, and the Jonathan Government did not recover from the public outrage that followed.

Supporting and building capacity in competitive sport

As outgoing Governor of Kwara State, he bought and financed Abubakar Bukola Saraki FC, making the team one of only two major teams that are not state-owned in Nigeria’s Premier League. His motivations were to empower young Nigerian footballers and build capacity within Nigerian football.

President of the 8th Nigerian Senate

Following the victory of his party, the All Progressives Congress (APC) in the 2015 election, he was elected by his colleagues as president of the 8th Senate on June 9, 2015. He quickly commenced work for the adoption of the Senate Legislative Agenda, which focused on three broad areas: Improving Livelihood, Improving Governance and, Improving Business.

Under the Improving Business agenda, he has directed a comprehensive review of the business-related legislations in Nigeria with a view to improving Nigeria's ease-of-doing-business ranking as well as improving the general operative environment for business in Nigeria. Even within the short time he has been President of Senate, he has demonstrated a remarkable ability to engineer bi-partisan cooperation and consensus on important issues like the screening of ministerial nominees and the 2016 Appropriation Bill.

Early Political Career – Assistant to President Olusegun Obasanjo

Saraki started his political career in 2000 when he was appointed as Special Assistant on Budget to President Olusegun Obasanjo. In this position, he initiated the Fiscal Responsibility Bill and served on the Economic Policy Coordination Committee, where he was responsible for the formulation and implementation of several key economic policies for Nigeria. Before his 2000 appointment, he has had considerable experience in private business, especially in the banking sector where he served as Executive Director of the former Societe Generale Bank until 2000.

Personal Life

Born Abubakar Bukola Saraki in 1962, he trained as a medical doctor at the London Hospital Medical College, London, where he obtained M.B.B.S in 1987. He practiced medicine in Rush Green Hospital, Essex, from 1988 to 1989 before returning to Nigeria to an illustrious career in business and politics. He holds the traditional title of the *Turaki* of Ilorin, conferred on him by the Emir of Ilorin, Alhaji Ibrahim Zulu-Gambari in 2009. He was also the first serving Governor to be awarded the national honour of Commander of the Order of the Niger (CON) 2010. Other awards he has won include: Governor of the Year by THISDAY Newspapers (2004); Africa Club Award – Harvard Business School (2005); Best Governor in Africa by the Kenneth Kaunda Foundation (2006); Award of Excellence by Nigerian Bar Association (2010); Award of Excellence by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (2010); Award of Excellence in Development of Education and Health Care Delivery in Nigeria by College of Medicine, University of Lagos (2012); Emerging Political Icon of Africa by the African Leadership Magazine (2013).

Dr. Saraki is married to Toyin Ojora–Saraki, a lawyer and Founder-President of the Wellbeing Foundation Africa (WBF Africa), a pan-African maternal health and wellbeing charity. WBF Africa has become one of the most influential and active organisations in the area of maternal, newborn and child health (MNCH). Together, they have four children.

Contacts

His Social Media Accounts are:

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