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## Editorial

Dear readers,

This has become a very weighty and varied edition of the Swiss Gazette, which allows me to keep the editorial very short. I trust you will find the different contributions interesting. They reflect the broad range of our activities, not least the many projects that are developing under the umbrella of the bilateral Migration Partnership. At the Berne meetings of February 20, 2012, both sides paid tribute to the progress achieved in the short time since the agreement's signing. It is our firm intention to pursue this intensified cooperation with Nigeria, at a time when the country goes through challenging times, especially in terms of security.

As you will see, we have increased those parts of the Gazette where we invite interesting individuals to express themselves, thus giving more space to a bigger diversity of voices relevant to the Swiss-Nigerian relationship. In this edition, we feature contributions by a Nigerian architect in Switzerland, an NDLEA official, a representative of the NGO "International Social Service", two enthusiastic Swiss citizens who have launched a hospital project in Nigeria, a secretary at the Embassy, and finally our Honorary Consul in Lagos.

Andreas Baum  
Ambassador of Switzerland

## Portrait

**Prof. Charles Job**



Prof. Charles Job  
(Lecturer at the Bern University of Applied Studies)

**For his idea to transform recycled agricultural waste into affordable building materials in Zaria, Nigeria, Prof. Charles Job won the Holcim Awards for Africa/Middle East 2011. He lectures at the Bern University of Applied Sciences, and in the following contribution, he tells us his story, from the busy streets of Lagos to the "orderly life" of Bern and Zurich:**

### Origins

*I was born a few weeks before Nigeria attained her Independence from Great Britain in 1960. I grew up in Lagos. The Lagos of my youth was then the Federal capital of Nigeria, long, long before Abuja was conceived. I attended primary school in the bustling city, with its eternal traffic jams, its vibrant, colourful world of small traders' shops, street vendors, buses and hawkers and all that is the visual and aural backdrop of many cities in Africa.*

*I attended Ijebu Ode Grammar School, and at the age of 15, left to further my studies in the United Kingdom. Many years later, whilst studying architecture at Oxford Brookes University, I met my Swiss wife. After a short stint in Paris, we decided to settle down in Zurich, the de facto financial and cultural capital of Switzerland.*

### Language

*Though German was rather alien to my African ears, I loved the challenge of starting anew and getting to know a different culture. Although I had then grown up in Europe, Zurich in particular, and Switzerland in general, was a world apart from other European cities*



# The Swiss Gazette

Embassy of Switzerland in Nigeria

*I had been to. I was struck by the “orderliness” and the apparently smooth pace of life here. Compared to the British public transport infrastructure, Swiss trams, trains and buses were incredibly punctual and Swiss streets were ceremoniously hosed down and cleaned by specially designed machines on rainy days!*

*After an invaluable, three month intensive course in German, I started my architectural career in the office of the renowned Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava.*

### Teaching

*Soon my independent spirit took over, and I left the office determined to set up my own practise and do things my own way. I applied for a part time teaching position at the Swiss Federal Polytechnic (ETH) in Zurich, where I remained as a junior faculty member for several years. This was an invaluable position for my future careers in Switzerland. Not only did I learn all I know about university didactics and teaching eager bright students (in German!), I also had an opportunity to start my second career as product designer*

### Part time working

*Teaching 2 days a week guaranteed a basic income and afforded me time that I could dedicate to my passion for designing products. I remained at the ETH for a number of years. During this period, I had taken part in many international design competitions and luckily won several prizes. I still run a small studio, designing products for several international companies ([www.charlesjob.com](http://www.charlesjob.com)).*

### University lecturer

*20 years after my arrival in Switzerland, and with my experience at the ETH, I applied for a position at the Bern University of Applied Sciences’ department of Architecture, initially as Junior faculty, with responsibility for running an English speaking studio which welcomed Chinese and Indian students for a period of 3 months every year. This led to my present position as Professor for Architectural Design Theory.*

### Research

*As an expat Nigerian, I was approached to suggest ways of improving our department’s long standing exchange programme with the University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus (UNEC). Following a 2 week tour of several institutions in Nigeria, we decided to collaborate with the Departments of Architecture and Engineering at ABU Zaria and UNEC in a research programme that would be an educational vehicle with which to address a range of academic, environmental and socio-cultural issues pertinent to many developing economies that include:*

- Environmental pollution;

- Agricultural waste recycling;
- Sustainable resource management;
- Provision of affordable housing;
- Accessibility to Affordable Social Housing.

*With a population of 140 million, Nigeria has an estimated housing deficit of 17 million units. This deficit mostly affects low income earners. In view of this, we saw an urgent need to research and propose innovative strategies for effective delivery of affordable housing to this group.*

### Materials and methods

*Plant-based agricultural wastes from the cultivation of rice, maize and cassava crops are often incinerated or simply left to rot. Our research shows that natural fibers from these and other materials offer a cheap and sustainable resource for the production of building materials to achieve a reduction in construction costs, reducing the dependence on imported, expensive alternatives like cement. The boards are bonded with natural tannin-based adhesive. This is environment friendly, and the technology can be easily transferred to the local industry.*

### Holcim Award for Sustainable Construction 2011

*We were successfully awarded an encouragement Prize for our efforts with the renowned Holcim Award. Our ultimate goal is to provide prototype case study dwellings using these panels, informed by local customs and integrated into the local community, involving as many people as possible in the design and building process.*

For more information: [charles.job@bfh.ch](mailto:charles.job@bfh.ch)

## Politics

### Political Consultations between Nigeria and Switzerland

In the framework of the ongoing intensification of the bilateral relationship, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Martin Uhomobhi, visited Berne on February 20, 2012. He held political consultations with his Swiss counterpart. This meeting was immediately followed by talks in the areas of migration and human rights. Please refer to the following media release for further information about these meetings.

**20.02.2012: The Secretary of State of the Swiss Federal Department for Foreign Affairs, Peter Maurer, received a Nigerian delegation in Berne on 20 February headed by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of**