



Chinua Achebe joins the GEANCO Foundation as its Honorary Chairman

The GEANCO Foundation (www.geanco.org) is proud to announce that Chinua Achebe, Africa's most well-known and respected writer, will serve as its honorary Chairman. The mission of The GEANCO Foundation is to develop and manage outstanding medical, educational and athletic facilities in Nigeria. GEANCO's first project is the development of a world-class hospital, Augustine Memorial Hospital, in Anambra State, Nigeria. When completed, Augustine Memorial will be an answer to the prayers of many, including Professor Achebe.

"I often question why there is not a single world-class hospital in all of southeast Nigeria that is comparable to the best hospitals in Europe and America," said Achebe. "The one and only reason I remain abroad is the absence of world-class health facilities in native lands of my Igbo people."

"We warmly embrace this special opportunity not only to provide Nigeria with a world-class hospital, but also to at last bring Nigeria's most beloved son back home," commented Dr. Emmanuel Egbogah, a GEANCO board member and the Special Adviser on Petroleum Affairs to Nigeria's president Umaru Yar'Adua. "As we develop this first-of-its-kind facility, we are delighted that Professor Achebe will help guide our efforts."

Chinua Achebe, generally regarded as one of the most important living African writers, is also considered one of the most original literary artists writing in the English language. His masterpiece, Things Fall Apart (1958), has sold eight million copies worldwide and has been translated into forty-five languages. In 2008, Oprah Winfrey named the book as one of the five that she feels everyone must read at least once in their life.

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Though Professor Achebe has received and declined hundreds of requests to join other charities, the superlative team and plan GEANCO has in place convinced the world-known African to lend his name and credibility to this particular mission.

“I am proud to serve as honorary Chairman to such a strong, dynamic organization,” said Achebe. “Nigeria has one of the worst health care systems in the world. Infant mortality rates and other indices of societal wellness are some of the worst on the planet. I am eager to do whatever I can to help GEANCO bring much-needed relief to my people.”

The GEANCO Foundation was officially created by Dr. Godwin Onyema and his family in 2005. Directors on its board hold degrees from Harvard, Princeton, Yale Business School, Boston College, Georgetown, Johns Hopkins and Stanford’s law and business schools. The organization is a pro bono client of the global accounting firm Ernst & Young LLP and the international law firm Mayer Brown LLP. Former Illinois Attorney General Tyrone Fahner serves on GEANCO’s board of directors. The governor of Anambra State has given to GEANCO two-hundred acres of land for free to build Augustine Memorial and future projects.

GEANCO is assembling a team of medical and healthcare development experts to travel to Nigeria later this year to conduct a field visit to Anambra State. The team, which will include professionals affiliated with one of the world’s leading medical schools, will create a business plan and feasibility study which will guide the development and construction of the modern hospital.

The first stage of Augustine Memorial will include an advanced women and children’s center and a clinic dedicated to the treatment and prevention of HIV/AIDS, malaria and other infectious diseases. The final stage of the hospital will include 200 beds and major trauma, cancer, and dialysis units. The facility’s cardiac center has been endowed by Dr. Stella Okoli, CEO of Emzor Pharmaceuticals, the largest indigenous pharmaceutical company in Nigeria. The Burn Unit has been endowed by Dr. Egbogah.

GEANCO’s CEO, Dr. Godwin Onyema, is especially excited about his organization’s new honorary Chairman.

“Guided by Chinua’s wisdom and inspired by his fierce love for our people, I look to GEANCO’s future, and the future of Nigeria, with renewed hope and joy.”