

## **Intellectual Property Study Tour 2021<sup>1</sup>**

**April 14 – 16, 2021  
Abuja, Nigeria.**

### **A Report**

#### Introduction

From April 14 – 16, 2021, the WIPO Nigeria Office hosted the 15 winners of the 2020 WIPO National IP Essay Competition in Abuja, on an Intellectual Property Study Tour. The tour was designed to expose the participants to the practical aspects of the administration of intellectual property (IP) in Nigeria, as well as afford them an opportunity to engage directly with the faces and institutions behind IP administration in Nigeria, thereby contributing to the efforts of the WNO to build capacity and create further awareness in the area of IP amongst students of tertiary institutions.

#### Background

On April 26, 2020, as part of efforts to mark the World IP Day 2020, the WIPO Nigeria Office launched the maiden edition of the WIPO National IP Essay Competition for students of all tertiary institutions in Nigeria, who were invited to submit essays of no more than 1500 words on the topic, *“Making Innovation work for a Green Future in Nigeria”*. Out of a total of 262 entries received for the competition, and from a pool of 30 finalists, 15 winners emerged.

As part of their prizes, all the winners (and finalists) were offered WIPO Academy scholarships to undertake any WIPO distance learning course of their choosing, IP internship/fellowship opportunities, certificates of achievement, and an opportunity to participate in a WIPO organized IP study tour. Additionally, the overall competition winner, Ms. Susan Chioma Omeh, received a WIPO scholarship to participate in the blended Advanced International Course on IP Asset Management organized by the Korean IP Office (KIPO), while the first and second runners up, received scholarships to attend the WIPO Summer School in South Africa.

This is a summary of the IP study tour.

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<sup>1</sup> Organized by the WIPO Nigeria Office for winners of the 2020 WIPO National IP Essay Competition

## **The IP Study Tour**

Delivering on its commitment to the winners of the essay competition, the IP Study Tour was designed by the WNO to incorporate learning elements in intellectual property which prioritized engagement with major stakeholders involved in the administration of IP in Nigeria. At least three major benefits for the winners formed the objective for this activity:

1. An opportunity to witness the practical aspects of IP administration in Nigeria, including some of the key challenges, which would serve to enhance their capacity to research and identify useful options that could support the growth of the Nigerian IP administrative system.
2. An opportunity for winners to learn more about WIPO, and indeed, the available learning opportunities and resources for students and their development in the area of IP from WIPO.
3. An opportunity for the winners to receive practical professional mentoring towards possible careers in the field of IP and innovation.

A total of eight substantive learning sessions were covered over the course of the three days, incorporating mentoring, lectures, and institutional study visits. These sessions are summarized below.

### **Session One (April 14, 2021) An Introduction to Intellectual Property:**

The participants were provided with an introductory exposition to the field of IP by Ms. Victoria Onyeagbako, an intern with the WIPO Nigeria Office. This exciting introductory session covered topics, such as, definitions of IP, justifications for IP, theories of IP and an overview of various types of IP rights.

### **Session Two (April 14, 2021) Intellectual Property in Practice:**

A mentoring session on “IP in Practice” followed. This session was designed as an interactive learning session with practicing IP experts on various aspects of IP practice in Nigeria. The discussion covered topics such as IP trends in Nigeria, tips on commencing IP practice, amongst others. The panel included, Mr. O. M. Atoyebi, SAN, Managing Partner, *Omaplex Law Firm*, ably represented by the firm’s Head of IP practice, Mr. Ibrahim Wali, Mr. Davidson Oturu – Partner, *Aelix Law Firm* and Ms. Tolu Olaloye – Senior Associate, *Jackson, Etti & Edu*.

### **Session Three (April 14, 2021) Copyright Administration in Nigeria:**

The students were warmly received by the Director General, Nigerian Copyright Commission (NCC), Mr. John Asein as well as the management team of the Commission at the offices of the NCC Headquarters in Abuja. After a brief ceremony, which included an investiture of the 15 winners as Copyright Ambassadors in Nigeria<sup>2</sup> towards propagating IP knowledge in their institutions and the larger world, the Director of the Nigerian Copyright Institute, Mr. Mike Akpan, made a formal presentation and responded to the students’ questions on the Administration of Copyright in Nigeria. The NCC also pledged to support the first book publication of any of the 15

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<sup>2</sup> As copyright ambassadors, the NCC will rely on the students to provide inputs to the draft policy for IP institutions for a stipulated IP scheme in universities; play a role in the intensified anti- piracy campaign and building support for the IP system for growth.

winners. Members of the press, including the National Television Authority (NTA), were present to cover this story and interact with winners.



*Winners of the Essay Competition with the NCC*

#### **Session Four (April 15, 2021) Intellectual Property and Traditional Knowledge:**

Oluwatobiloba Moody, Counsellor with the WIPO Nigeria Office, provided an introduction to traditional knowledge and intellectual property. He explained the concepts, the relationship between TK and IP, some relevant ongoing developments at WIPO, as well as some key challenges to protecting TK through the IP system.

#### **Session Five (April 15, 2021) Trademarks, Patents and Designs Administration in Nigeria**

The students were warmly welcomed by Ms. Stella Ezenduka (Registrar, Patents and Designs), and Ms. Anne Adeleye (Acting Registrar, Trademarks). Ms. Jane Igwe (Asst. Chief Registrar, Patent and Designs) provided an introduction to Patents and Designs, while Ms. Adeleye alongside some staff of the Trademarks Registry provided an overview of trademark administration in Nigeria. The presentations were followed by an interactive Q & A session.



*Winners of the Essay Competition with the Patents and Designs and Trademarks Registries*

#### **Session Six (April 15, 2021) Meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs**

The students were warmly received at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by the Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Geoffery Onyeama. At the roundtable discussion with the Minister, the students shared their experiences from the essay competition, and proffered possible policy suggestions on areas which caught their attention over the tour as well as in the context of their essays. In preparing for this session, the students worked independently and, indeed, developed their ideas and suggestions based on their internal deliberations. The four key recommendations raised by the students that formed the basis of their interactions were:

- Possible reforms in the patent administration system in Nigeria to inculcate a more substantive as opposed to largely formal search of patent applications.

- Potential for introduction of *pre – grant* opposition mechanism in Nigeria’s patent system to encourage public participation in Nigeria’s innovation landscape and further prevent the production of harmful inventions.
- A ratification and domestication of relevant international treaties to aid Nigeria’s national legal and policy frameworks on IP.
- A need for stipulated times where works which fall into the public domain are announced.

The Hon. Minister engaged with the students on all the points raised, sharing experiences, lessons, and highlighting the pros and cons, as well as some challenges and prospects of the suggestions raised.

### **Session Seven (April 16, 2021) Entrepreneurial Mentoring and Innovation Leadership:**

The mentoring session was facilitated by Dr. Obichi Obiajunwa, an Innovation Expert and global health Strategist, as well as the Founder of the *Young Innovation Leaders Fellowship*. Practical situation challenges, results and possible career choices in the innovation field were shared with participants.

### **Session Eight (April 16, 2021) IP Commercialization in Nigeria:**

The students were warmly received by the Director General, NOTAP, Dr. Dan- Azumi Muhammed, as well as members of the management team. The DG discussed NOTAP (its mission, vision and activities) as one of the 17 parastatals of the Federal Ministry of Science and Technology. He further explained the process and the role of NOTAP in terms of IP commercialization in Nigeria. He also highlighted some key challenges as well as some of the initiatives of NOTAP to address these, encouraging the winners to accept responsibility for the development of Nigeria.



Winners of the Essay Competition with NOTAP DG and Management Team

### **Session Nine (April 16, 2021) Closing Open Session**

The Tour came to an end with a closing session facilitated by the WIPO Nigeria Office. In this session, the learning objectives were revisited and the students were exposed to lessons about WIPO. It was also an opportunity for the students to highlight their feedback from the tour.

### **Informal outings:**

During the course of the tour, the students were hosted to an African-themed networking dinner by the WIPO Nigeria Office on Thursday, April 15, 2021. In addition, the NCC organized an

informal reception to host the winners as Copyright Ambassadors and discuss further the roles and expectations of their new assignments on Friday, April 16, 2021.

## **Logistics**

The tour was organized in full compliance with the COVID-19 protocols, as well as with close coordination with the UN Department for Safety and Security (UNDSS) as well as the UN Clinic. The students were lodged throughout their stay at a UN approved hotel – the Royalton Hotel and were provided with secure transportation for their movements across the city. As financed participants, they were also provided the regular DSA for funded participants to support their accommodation and boarding while in Abuja.

Upon their departure, the students received WIPO packages which included learning materials from the WNO library as well as some WIPO souvenirs.

## **Some Winners' Testimonials**

### **Amara Elekwa**

*The WIPO essay competition allowed me to broaden my horizon on the aspect of green technology and climate issues which Nigeria and the world at large is currently battling and the ways which Intellectual Property law aids in the repair of these damages done and the promotion of a greener lifestyle in Nigeria.*

### **Sina Akinmusire**

*The WIPO National Essay Competition 2020 afforded me, as an IP enthusiast, an opportunity to practice the knowledge I have garnered about IP within the four walls of the classroom and through individual research. The competition tasked me to come up with how the IP system in Nigeria can be positioned to make innovation work for a green future in Nigeria. I am delighted to have contributed to this discourse and most importantly, gain more understanding about the field of IP.*

### **Rafiat Shittu**

*The 2020 WIPO essay competition was an absolutely amazing experience. The entire process from doing research and writing the essay to interacting with the WIPO Nigeria office and attending the study tour, gave me a lot of exposure into the vast opportunities that exist in the world of Intellectual Property and I am now considering pursuing a career in Intellectual Property in the near future.*

### **Chibuzor Paul Ndubisi**

*"If I had to choose only two stories to tell about my undergraduate tenure, one of them would definitely be that of the WIPO Nigeria IP Essay Competition 2020. This contest helped me to eliminate all misconceptions as to the concept and role of intellectual property in all spheres of business and life. It showed me that I--and indeed all of us--have a role to play in advancing the cause of human ingenuity to realize the nation of our dreams. And most importantly, it exposed me to some of the most amazing people I have ever met, not to mention the mouth-watering prizes and benefits that followed. To say that I cannot thank the WIPO Nigeria Office enough would be to say little."*

### **Victor Fabarebo**

*Deciding to put in for the WIPO Nigeria National Essay certainly qualifies as one of the best decisions I made last year. Not only was the writing process an eye-opener to the various ways which IP could prove to be a veritable tool to move society forward, the prizes that followed were so development-oriented.*

*Noteworthy is the IP Study Tour which provided an opportunity to meet various stakeholders in Nigeria's IP landscape and acquire considerable knowledge about IP in the Nigerian context.*

### **Abasi- Akara Edet**

*Considering that I had no prior coursework on intellectual property or any previous essay entries, the competition was a great starting point for me. The essay was on making innovation work for a greener future in Nigeria. To start with, researching the essay topic was mostly interesting because IP is a very relatable field. Also, the fact that the essay addressed environmental degradation brought it even closer to heart. This is because we can not depend on the earth to save itself but we have to take action ourselves. My essay was able to address the role of patents, trademarks, copyrights, and industrial designs towards encouraging innovation and inventiveness. But beyond this, the essay identified the key realities of IP in Nigeria and made recommendations for a better system.*

*As a winner, I got an internship with a top-tier Nigerian law firm, a scholarship for a WIPO distance learning course, and recently participated in the IP study tour. I also received lots of IP resources from the WIPO Nigerian office and was recently appointed as an ambassador for the Nigerian Copyright Commission. Overall, deciding to participate in the competition has proved quite fulfilling and rewarding. The experiences have deepened my interest in IP and have been such a catalyst for my growth in the field. Going forward, I hope to utilize all I have learnt and pay it forward too.*

### **Adeife Omolumo**

*Participating in the 2020 WIPO Essay Competition was definitely one of the best decisions I made last year. Writing the essay for me was therapeutic as it provided a platform to apply my basic understanding of intellectual property in providing practical solutions. The rewards and opportunities gotten from emerging as one of the winners has truly exceeded my expectations and I highly recommend that every IP enthusiast should avail themselves of this opportunity to learn and grow in the field of IP by taking part in this year's essay competition.*

### **Oghosa Agnes Eghe- Abe**

*The only word I can use to describe the study tour is amazing, that's it. The conversations flowed easily, the excitement was contagious and the laughter was in abundance; everything just clicked. It provided me with the opportunity to visit institutions responsible for Intellectual Property administration in Nigeria and meet with important individuals in the industry. The IP professionals and regulators we met were kind, eager to impact knowledge and regarded us as intellectual equals.*

*It was an incredible experience and I'm so happy I got the opportunity to attend the tour, it was more than anything I could have expected.*

### **Habeeb Asudemade**

*"Putting in for the WIPO National Essay Competition remains a step I'm glad I took. Researching the topic exposed me to the several laxities in Nigeria's IP administration and how the country can learn from other climates where IP works as it should. If my interest in IP wasn't solid before this competition, I'm pretty sure it's been improved after going through with the essay. More importantly, the IP study tour allowed me to gain more practical insights into how IP really works and where the problems originate from in Nigeria. I am grateful to the WIPO Nigeria Office for organizing this competition and giving all winners a warm reception at Abuja. It's a phenomenal competition and I encourage eligible students to apply. If I had to do this again, I gladly will."*

### **Susan Omeh**

*The WIPO Nigeria National Essay competition 2020 is my best competition experience, yet. Besides from the fact that it offered me first hand opportunity to expand my knowledge-base on IP while still providing*

*very practicable solutions to Nigeria's environmental problems, I met very amazing IP professionals and students during the WIPO Nigeria Study Tour. I am delighted this opportunity has been brought home to Nigeria and I am more honored to have been a part of it. I look forward to doing more in the IP space going forward!*

### **List of Participants (Essay Competition Winners)**

1. Ms. Omeh Susan Chioma  
*Faculty of Law, University of Nigeria, Nsukka (500 level)*
2. Ms. Chantelle Chinwendu Chiwetalu  
*Faculty of Law, University of Nigeria, Nsukka (500 level)*
3. Mr. Olanrewaju Toheeb Balogun  
*Faculty of Law, Lagos State University (300 level)*
4. Mr. Rotimi Owolabi  
*Faculty of Law, Obafemi Awolowo University (500 level)*
5. Mr. Ndubisi Chibuzor Paul  
*Faculty of Engineering, University of Nigeria, Nsukka (500 level)*
6. Mr. Habeebullah Asudemade  
*Faculty of Law, University of Ibadan (500 level)*
7. Ms. Blessing Anurika Nwankwo  
*Faculty of Law, Obafemi Awolowo University (300 level)*
8. Ms. Rafiat Temitura Shittu  
*Faculty of Law, University of Lagos (500 level)*
9. Mr. Abasi- Akara Edet  
*Faculty of Law, University of Nigeria, Nsukka (500 level)*
10. Mr. Victor Fabarebo  
*Faculty of Law, University of Ibadan (300 level)*
11. Ms. Eghe- Abe Oghosa Agnes  
*Faculty of Law, Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti (400 level)*
12. Ms. Ngozi Agatha Umeodinka  
*Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti (500 level)*
13. Mr. Sina Victor Akinmusire  
*Faculty of Law, Lagos State University (500 level)*
14. Ms. Adeife Adebare Omolumo  
*Faculty of Law, University of Lagos (500 level)*
15. Ms. Amarachukwu Elekwa  
*Faculty of Law, Afe Babalola University, Ado Ekiti (500 level)*