

Nigeria Launches an African-Built Satellite

Difficulty:



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Discussion activities to be done after completing this EA lesson

Today's report is about two recent technological developments in Africa. A Nigerian satellite is mentioned in the title, but which other African country is mentioned, and what was its technological development? How did these developments come about? What hopes do people have for them?

Extension discussion topics

A. Talking about and going over the specific topic / idea / issue in listening text

Introduction = How was the Nigerian satellite developed? What will it do? What technology was just bought by Ghana? What are the hopes for these two types of technology?

1. How was NigeriaSat-X developed?
 - Result of a training agreement between Nigeria's National Space Research and Development Agency and Surrey Satellite Technology in the UK.
 - Designed and built by Africans.
2. What will the NigeriaSat-X pictures be used for?
 - City planning.
 - Mapping territory, creating more accurate maps.
 - Provide valuable information about crop and land conditions.
 - Help in disaster relief efforts.
3. What are some of the other benefits of training engineers in satellite technology?
 - Corps of very experienced engineers.
 - They can use their new skills in other technologies.
 - They can help the development of the Nigerian economy.
4. What details do you remember about the technological system that was just bought in Ghana?
 - Biometric voter registration system.
 - Cost: \$45 million.
 - Should be ready for next year's presidential election.
 - Will be used to in order to have more accurate voter rolls, and so increase voter trust in the election process.

B. Expanding on (one of) the topics / ideas / issues in listening text

Topic = Technology and developing countries.

1. The report talks about satellites for Nigeria and a biometric voter registration system for Ghana. What benefits do you think this technology will have for these two countries? If you were from Ghana or Nigeria, would you be happy with these developments? Would you feel proud? Would you wish that the money had been spent on something else?
2. The report talks about a training agreement between Nigeria's National Space Research and Development Agency and a UK company called Surrey Satellite Technology. Do you think that collaborations (working together) between governments in developing countries and companies in industrialized countries are a good idea? Why or why not? What could be the advantages and disadvantages of this type of agreement?
3. Do you know of any agreements like this between your country and either an industrialized country or a developing country (depending on the case)? Do you think the agreement benefits both countries?

OR, Topic = Satellite images.

Find out all you can about how images taken by satellite cameras are used and give an oral presentation of your findings to a partner or to your teacher.

C. Extending discussion of (one of) the topics / ideas / issues in listening text

Topic = Voting technology.

1. The report talks about a biometric voter registration system that Ghana recently bought. How would a system like this work? Do you think there might be problems using the system in a country like Ghana, as opposed to a fully industrialized country? Why or why not?
2. People in many countries now use voting machines in their elections. What are the good and bad points about these machines? Do voting machines necessarily make the election process more trustworthy? What problems have there been with this type of technology?
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voting_machines)
3. Officials in Ghana hope that the new biometric voter registration system will make people trust the election process more. Do you think this will happen? Why or why not?
4. Do you know what type of voting technology is used in your country? Is there a biometric voter registration system? Do people vote on computers? Do people vote on paper ballots that are counted by machines? Do people in your country generally trust the election process? Why or why not?

Audioscript

This is the VOA Special English Technology Report.

Nigeria has launched the first satellite designed and built by Africans. The NigeriaSat-X is one of two Earth observation satellites that the country recently launched. These are Nigeria's third and fourth satellites.

The NigeriaSat-X is the result of a training agreement between the National Space Research and Development Agency and a company called Surrey Satellite Technology. Twenty-six Nigerian engineers attended a training program over an eighteen-month period at the satellite developer's offices in the United Kingdom.

Steve Young is head of business development for the company. He says the skills that the young Nigerian scientists have learned will help more than just their country's space program.

"You are now beginning to train a corps of very experienced engineers, high-technology technicians, and people that are going to benefit the wider economy. That also is a very good effect the Nigerians get from investing in high-tech programs. They've got to develop their economies, and one of the ways they do that is by doing this."

The cameras on the satellites can show details of objects as small as two and a half meters across. These images will be used to map territory and help with city planning. The pictures can also provide valuable information about crop and land conditions, and assist in disaster relief efforts.

Steve Young says this kind of information is often lacking in developing countries.

"We often take it for granted in industrialized nations that we have all this information, we have accurate maps, we have land registries, we have planning systems, we have precision agriculture systems. We have all this stuff in place, but for a lot of countries, they don't."

In another technology development, Ghana has become the latest African country to invest in a biometric voter registration system. Such systems are used to confirm the identity of voters when they register to vote. These systems commonly use measures like fingerprints or face recognition.

Ghanaian election officials say the forty-five-million-dollar system should be in operation in time for next year's presidential election.

Christopher Fomunyoh is West and Central Africa director for the Washington-based National Democratic Institute. He says a trustworthy voter list is one way to protect elections.

"There's a sense that once you get the voter rolls in order, once the voter rolls reflect the electorate or the population that's of voting age in the appropriate constituencies, then the management of the rest of the electoral process is already fraud-proof in a way."

But Mr. Fomunyoh says a biometric system is only one of many tools needed to win the trust of voters. Election disputes have led to deadly violence in several African countries in the past year, including Ivory Coast, Guinea and Nigeria.

And that's the VOA Special English Technology Report, written by June Simms. I'm Christopher Cruise.

Correction: The NigeriaSat-X is not the first satellite designed and built by Africans. This story, and a previous headline, incorrectly said it was.