

## ***INTRODUCTION***

I had the opportunity of attending the FIG YSN Conference and the FIG Working Week in Accra, Ghana with the aid of the Young Surveyor Grant, which I, along with three other young surveyors, had the privilege of winning. It was my first time traveling outside Nigeria, and also my first time in Ghana, so I was excited.

## ***WINNING THE GRANT***

On January 26, 2024, I received an email from the FIG Foundation notifying me that I had won the FIG Foundation grant. From that day onwards, all my thoughts were of Ghana, the YSN Conference, and the FIG Working Week. I didn't go a day without thinking about my upcoming trip. On February 5, 2024, the selection was officially announced on the FIG website and FIG YSN social media platforms. I was beaming with pride and sharing the link with my friends, family, and colleagues. They were all proud of me.

## ***PREPARATIONS AND JOURNEY***

On March 6, I was contacted by the FIG through Maria Bargholz, and after sending the necessary information that was requested in order to book a flight to Accra, a flight was booked and my ticket was sent to me. I have to note that even though I encountered a mild issue (I had to change airports from Abuja to Lagos because there was no flight from Enugu, my nearest airport, to Abuja), Ms. Maria's efficiency and patience regarding my flight booking were noted and very much appreciated. Finally, on April 18, 2024, I received my flight ticket via email.

On May 17, 2024, I flew from Enugu to Lagos where I then took another flight from Lagos to Accra. It was my first time ever on a plane and I was both nervous and excited. In Lagos, my flight was delayed by 3 hours, so by the time I arrived in Accra, it was already past midnight and the transport which was supposed to pick me up at 9 pm had already left. I texted David Elegbede, Chair of FIG YSN Africa, who was already in Accra, and he swiftly arranged for the hotel cab to pick me up at the airport. When I arrived at the hotel, I was immersed in so much hospitality and kindness. I had known about the niceness of Ghanaians, but it was my first time experiencing it. Everyone was willing to assist you and make sure you're comfortable. I felt immediately at home at the hotel.

## ***YSN CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS***

On the morning of May 18, 2024, which was the first day of the YSN conference, I arrived at the venue nervous but confident because it was my first international conference and I didn't know what to expect. The conference began with the opening remarks by Shirley Chapunza, Chair of FIG YSN, and was followed by presentations from Bryn Fosburgh, President of the FIG Foundation and Senior Vice President of Trimble, and also from the FIG Foundation grant winners. Finally, John Hohol, President Emeritus of the FIG Foundation, called each of the

grant winners (Fie, Angie, Angela, Farrah, and Victor) out and together with Bryn, presented each of us with our certificates. At the YSN Conference, I made new friends, connected and interacted with fellow grant winners, and also had discussions with these individuals on how to make the surveying profession more visible so that even kids would be aware of it like law and medicine. Even though we were all getting to know each other, the reception and atmosphere were warm and welcoming. In the evening, the YSN went out for a party which was organized by Leica Geosystems. It was quite memorable. The second day of the YSN Conference, May 19, was also as exciting as the first day. Finally, the YSN Conference ended with a charity event hosted by Leica Geosystems where young surveyors played beach volleyball and sold hats to raise money for charity. The FIG Working Week officially began that afternoon with its first plenary session.



*Receiving my Certificate from Bryn Fosburgh, FIG Foundation President, with John Hohol, President Emeritus*



*Posing for a picture with Firaz, Adamu, and Rvan at the YSN Conference*



*Group picture taken on the first day of the FIG YSN Conference*



*I finally got to meet Obianulu*



*Farrah and I on the first day of the FIG YSN Conference*



*From L-R: Nulu, Victor, Adamu, Uju, Adania, and David posing for a photo on the first day of the FIG YSN Conference*



*Having a great time with Angie, my new found friend and fellow grant winner at the YSN party*



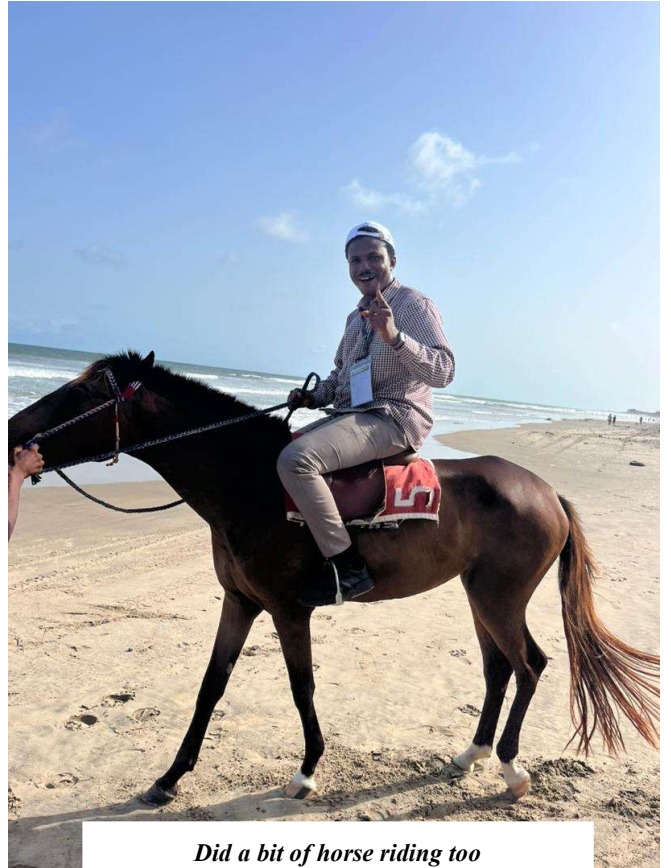
*Group picture of speakers and presenters on the second day of the FIG YSN Conference*



*Group picture taken on the Second day of the FIG YSN Conference*



*FIG YSN Charity Event*



*Did a bit of horse riding too*

## ***FIG WORKING WEEK HIGHLIGHTS***

The working week was filled with activities, including social events, which kept attendees occupied while giving them the opportunity to network with colleagues, make new friends, and connect with old ones. It was a week of learning, brainstorming, and sharing ideas. Five things stood out for me during the Working Week: the presence of the President of Ghana at the Opening Ceremony, the kindness of Ghanaians, Ghana's hot chocolate drink, the dances during the Gala Dinner, and a breakfast meeting with John Hohol and Bryn Fosburgh, two men whom I've come to greatly admire and respect for their unceasing passion towards the growth of young surveyors.



***Brainstorming during a session  
at the FIG Working Week***

***Photo with group members at the end of a  
session at the FIG Working Week***





*With Prof. Pietro Grimaldi at the FIG Working Week*



*With Anslem Parker at the South Africa stand in the exhibition hall*



*Having a great time at the Commission 2 dinner*



*Commission 2 dinner group photograph*





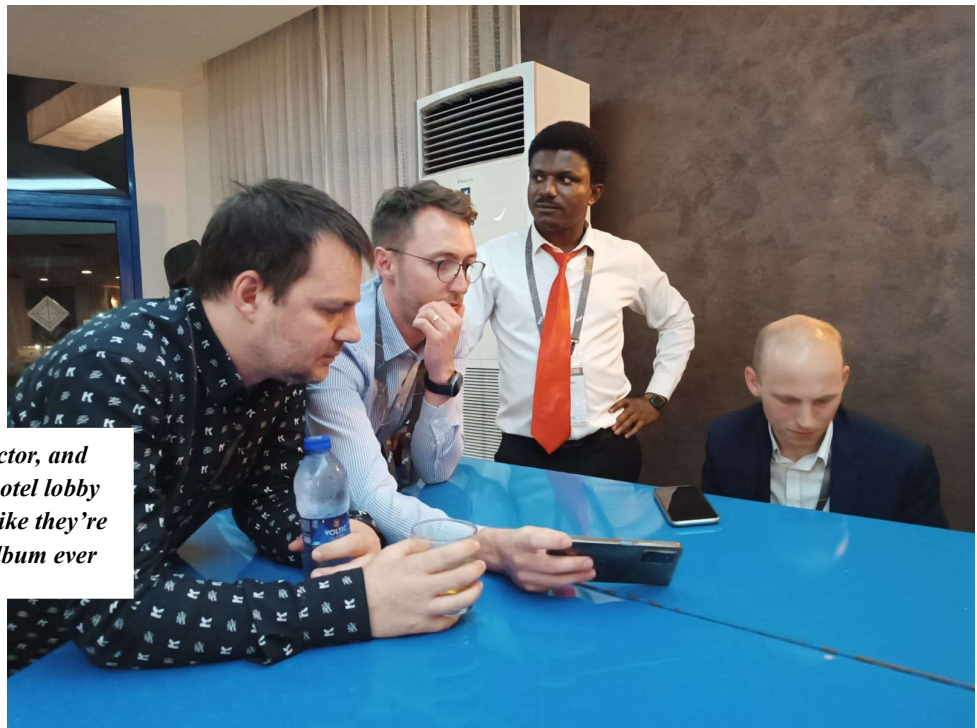
*Gala Dinner*



*In conversation with the FIG Foundation President,  
Bryn Fosburgh at the Gala Dinner*



*Group photograph of fellow FIG Foundation grant winners and young surveyors at the Gala Dinner*



*From L-R: Vlad, Iaroslav, Victor, and Rindert (on the piano) in the hotel lobby after the Gala Dinner looking like they're about to release the greatest album ever*

## ***FINAL THOUGHTS***

Finally, every good thing must come to an end. We had a final plenary session on May 23, where each of the grant winners was introduced to the general body. I was beaming with pride and smiling as I walked to the front when Bryn called my name.



***Introduction of Grant winners to the general assembly on the last day of the FIG Working Week***



***And it was my turn to make a speech***

I left for the airport by 3 pm the same day but due to a delay, my flight to Nigeria was rescheduled to 1 am. While I waited at the airport, I once again noticed the niceness of Ghanaians.

After a long wait, my flight was announced and I proceeded to board the flight. As the plane taxied along the runway and finally took off, I looked down at the beautiful country I was leaving behind and all the friends I had made in it and smiled. It is something that will live with me as long as I live.

I am grateful for my experiences during, and all through the FIG YSN Conference and the Working Week. Grateful to The FIG Foundation through Bryn Fosburgh and John Hohol for the opportunity to be a part of something wonderful. The true value of the FIG YSN conference and FIG Working Week lies in experiencing it personally rather than just hearing or being told about it.

*Victor Chinedu Okonkwo*

*FIG Young Surveyor Grant Winner, 2024*