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NEWSLETTER



Federal Government, UN Launch 'Hey Woman', A Drama Series On Gender-Based Violence To Mark 16 Days Of Activism

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L-R: Hon. Minister of Women Affairs, Dame Pauline Tallen; Wife of the Vice President, H.E. Mrs Dolapo Osinbajo; and Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Dr. Natalia Kanem.

As part of activities commemorating the 16 Days Activism against Gender-based Violence, the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs in collaboration with UNFPA Nigeria, has launched the premiere 'Hey Woman', a drama series by actress Stephanie Linus, on the reality of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Nigeria to mark the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence.

The videos were created to reinforce the messages of an urgent need to end Gender-based Violence by deepening knowledge around sexual and reproductive health and rights. This intervention was necessary as COVID-19 led to a global increase in GBV, with media referring to it as a "shadow pandemic."

At a ceremony held on 25 November 2021, at Transcorp Hilton Hotel Abuja, the First Lady, H.E. Dr. (Mrs) Aisha Buhari, represented by the wife of the Vice President, H.E. Mrs Dolapo Osinbajo, reiterated her zero tolerance for gender-based violence. "I, Aisha Buhari, have zero tolerance for gender-based violence." She said.

The First Lady explained that the girl-child in Nigeria would continue to be a victim of exploitation and missed opportunities if all obstacles they face in getting a decent education, and becoming productive members of society were not removed.

Hon. Minister of Women Affairs, Dame Pauline Tallen, called for improved justice delivery for victims of gender-based violence in Nigeria. According to her, it is unacceptable that less than one percent of perpetrators of gender-based violence have been convicted.

"As of 24th of November, 2021, the total number of cases reported is 5,204 of which 3,125 survivors are demanding justice and only 33 perpetrators have so far been convicted, representing 0.51 percent," the Minister said, "I stand in solidarity with survivors of gender-based violence."

The Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Director UNFPA, Dr. Natalia Kanem, has promised to support the Nigerian government on programmes

on programmes aimed at combating gender-based violence and advocating for the rights of women and the girl child.

She said the agency was working to ensure that family planning services could be accessed by women and adolescent girls in need.



Hon. Minister of Women Affairs, Dame Pauline Tallen (Left); Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Dr. Natalia Kanem .



Spotlight Initiative



EU-UN Spotlight Initiative to end violence against women and girls

Stand Up To Ensure Dignity And Justice For Women And Girls—Kallon



L-R: UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator of the UN system in Nigeria, Mr. Edward Kallon; UN Women Country Representative for Nigeria, Ms. Comfort Lamp-
tey; and First Lady of Kebbi State, Dr Zainab Shinkafi-Bagudu at the programme on the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act: From Domestication to
Implementation, in Abuja.

As the 16 days of activism to end gender-based violence kicked off on 25 November, the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator of the UN system in Nigeria, Mr. Edward Kallon, has urged everyone to stand up to ensure dignity and justice for the most marginalised, especially women and girls.

He spoke at the UN Women Nigeria Programme on the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act: From Domestication to Implementation, held at Fraiser Suites Abuja on Thursday, 25 November.

“Now more than ever we must ensure to always say no to violence against women and girls. Lets stand together to ensure dignity and justice for women.” Mr. Kallon said, and further called for synergy on the implementation of the VAPP Act.

“Women and girls continue to be exposed to various forms of Gender Based Violence (GBV) and barriers in access to justice. We must use this opportunity to review the success of the implementation of the VAPP through strategic partnership, sensitization and promotion of women leadership in decision making.” He explained.

The Resident Coordinator charged all stakeholders to continue to build on the foundation of the transformation and realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nigeria and the 2030 target.

The First Lady of Kebbi State, Dr Zainab Shinkafi-Bagudu expressed her delight that finally the VAPP Act has been passed

into law in Kebbi. She disclosed that it was not a smooth sail for the VAPP Act as there were many challenging moments for the Governor, herself, and the leadership of the House of Assembly, but at the end there was a desired result.

Dr. Shinkafi-Bagudu, noted that all the 36 state of Nigeria and the FCT, have been very active in addressing issue of sexual and gender based violence.

“In terms of awareness, in terms of creating more facilities, in terms of capacity building, passing the appropriate laws, we have seen an unprecedented increase in the activities that will help reduce the scourge of sexual and gender base violence.” She added.

UN Women Country Representative in Nigeria, Ms. Comfort Lamp-
tey, explained that there was need for more efforts to address gender related violence especially in North-East Nigeria and other parts of the country which had being facing challenges of insecurity .

She explained that “UN Women supported efforts to respond to the humanitarian crisis in the North East through targeted programming around livelihood support and early recovery for women and girls; a broader transition from humanitarian relief to longer-term recovery and development; GBV prevention and protection for conflict-affected women and girls; and the improvement of conflict-affected women’s access to justice.”

Security Agencies In Nigeria Advance Strategy For Women's Inclusion In Peace Building



Hon. Minister of Women Affairs, Dame Pauline Tallen (Right); UN Women Country Representative, Ms. Comfort Lamptey (2nd right) and other dignitaries at the event.

“While we look forward to the realization of the objectives of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, we must strengthen women’s voices and participation. We must remember to involve women more in mediation and resolution of conflicts’, said Her Excellency, Dr. Aisha Buhari, at the 2nd Annual Forum of the Women, Peace and Security Sector at the National Defence College, Abuja.

The 2-day forum which held 2nd - 3rd, December 2021, was organised as part of activities for the 16 Days of Activism, by the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs in collaboration with the Nigeria Defence Headquarters, and with support from UN Women Nigeria and BMATT. With the theme ‘Mainstreaming Gender in National Early Warning Systems and Responses to Security Challenges’, the objective of the forum was to address operationalization of existing gender policies across security institutions, sharing lessons and good practices, provide actionable short and medium term recommendations necessary to achieve gender balance and deliver effective and quality gender responsive systems, operations and programming at all levels.

The Forum provided the platform for joint learning on the progress, challenges, and opportunities for advancing women’s meaningful representation within and across security sectors in Nigeria.

The forum was timely because while progress has been made in the recognition of the need to promote gender-responsive security sector reforms, including the passing of gender policies by the Armed Forces of Nigeria, Nigeria Police, the Nigeria Security and the Civil Defence Corps, and the demonstrated commitment to its gender responsive operations, a full-scale implementation of these policies is still a challenge. Recent reports show that women account for about 10% of military personnel, with similar data for the Police and other institutions; only a few security agencies have larger percentage of women in their personnel.

UN Women has in its programming undertaken baseline studies that indicate that more needs to be done to address issues of women’s representation across security services, through non-discriminatory recruitment policies, enhancement of conditions of service, opportunities for growth and leadership for women, through revised retention and promotion poli-

cies; strengthening knowledge and capacity for gender responsive security; and the development of mechanisms and guidelines to support internal and external security operations.

To enhance these efforts, the UN Women Nigeria in partnership with the German Government launched a project aimed at enhancing gender sensitive security sector operations and fostering community dialogue between women affected by conflict and security sector actors in the efforts to mainstream gender equity in Nigeria’s security sector.

In outlining some of the efforts of UN Women towards gender mainstreaming in peace building, Comfort Lamptey, UN Women Representative to Nigeria and the ECOWAS stated that, “UN Women facilitated and supported the institutional strengthening of security agencies in Nigeria, particularly the Armed Forces of Nigeria, Nigeria Police Force and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, by deepening the knowledge of officers on Gender Mainstreaming and the Women, Peace and Security frameworks, including the key pillars of UNSCR 1325 and the attendant Nigerian National and State Action Plans on the Resolution”.

Some of the recommendations emerging from the forum include: prioritization of gender analysis as the critical starting point for gender mainstreaming in the security sector; increasing women’s representation in decision-making level of security agencies; scaling up successes recorded in the implementation of internal gender policies; upgrading of gender desks to gender departments; sensitizing top management of security agencies to fast-track gender mainstreaming; establishing accountability mechanisms for effective monitoring of gender policy implementation; creating budget lines for implementation of these policies; and training relevant personnel for monitoring and resource mobilization.

Other recommendations include the need to enhance reporting of gender-based violence and administration of deterring punitive measures; and improving gender mainstreaming and safety for female personnel in the upcoming 2023 elections.

With improved gender mainstreaming in the security sector, gender inequality in peace building and conflict resolution will decrease, and more women will have equal access to opportunities in the security sector. Most importantly, according to UN Women, ‘Women’s participation in mediation is essential for achieving lasting, positive peace, which goes well beyond just the silencing of guns’.

Gender And Equal Opportunities Bill Does Not Contradict Our Religious or Cultural Beliefs



Prof. Mustapha Hussain Ismail, Executive Director, Center for Human Rights in Islam, speaking at 'The Men's Conversation'

“I am convinced that culture and religion are used to maintain the status quo, the discrimination against women and girls. I know the GEOB is not in contradiction with my cultural and religious beliefs”, with their right hands raised, men from different sectors professed, as they committed to advocating for the passage of the Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill (GEOB) at The Men’s Conversation.

The Men’s Conversation was organised by Women Radio WFM 91.7 on Monday November 15, 2021, with support from UN Women Nigeria. The objective of the The Men’s Conversation which was broadcast live on radio was to explore men’s perspective to the Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill (GEOB), clarify assumptions and socio-cultural misconceptions around the bill, and mobilize men’s support for the passage of the bill.

Participants include male technocrats, gender experts, activists and social workers from government, civil society organisations and development partners. They include Prof. Mustapha Hussain Ismail, Executive Director, Center for Human Rights in Islam; Setting the tone, Engr. Adebisi Olufunso (FNSE) permanent secretary Federal Ministry of Women Affairs; Dr. Hussaini Abdu, Country Director, CARE International; Samson Itodo, Executive Director, YIAGA Africa and convener of #NotTooYoungToRun; Representative of Dr Otovie Igbuzor, Chief of Staff to the Deputy Senate president, Dr Itia C. Otabor; Opeyemi Oriniowo, a development Specialist; Jide Ojo, a public affairs commentator, amongst others.

In 2016, the Gender and Equal Opportunities was rejected by the National Assembly on the argument the bill is not compatible with Nigerian culture and religious beliefs. Activists and gender experts argued that this was a misconception. However, since then, the bill has undergone revisions. The current version has scaled first reading at the Nigerian Senate, with anticipation of an imminent second reading.

Prof. Mustapha Hussain Ismail – at The Men’s Conversation – mentioned that the Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill aims to address a myriad of forms of injustice against women and girls, some of these injustices are addressed in the Quran. He assured that the bill does not contradict Islamic tenets and should be

embraced as a tool for social justice. The Executive Director, Center for Human Rights in Islam, further committed to promote passage of the bill using “relevant scriptures in the Quran to clear the misconceptions of the GEOB”.

“We are incomplete as human beings without the liberation and participation of the other half of the society, therefore, the struggle for the passage of the GEO Bill is the struggle for liberation of oneself,” Dr Kole Shettima, Director of MacArthur Foundation West Africa, asserted as he urged men to support the passage of the Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill.

The Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, Engr. Adebisi Olufunso (FNSE) stated that when the society denies women their rights or certain positions, the economy of the country suffers. He reiterated that gender equality is a development issue.

Participants committed to offering their platforms and network to create awareness on the benefits of the bill and advocate its passage. The consensus was that the content of the Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill does not contravene religious or cultural beliefs; fundamentally, it advocates equal opportunity for all and is a precursor for economic development.



UN, Federal Government Spotlight Gender Dimensions Of Anticorruption



To mark the 2021 International Anti-Corruption Day and 16 Days of Activism in Nigeria, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in collaboration with the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC); the Technical Unit on Governance and Anticorruption Reforms (TUGAR); UN Women; the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs; State Commissioners of Women Affairs; and several women groups gathered in Abuja to discuss the gender dimensions of anticorruption in Nigeria.

The links between gender equality and anticorruption have become subject of policy debate in recent years cumulating in a commitment by Member States at the 2021 United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Corruption: “We will improve our understanding of the linkages between gender and corruption, including the ways in which corruption can affect women and men differently, and we will continue to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women, including by mainstreaming it in relevant legislation, policy development, research,

projects and programmes, as appropriate and in accordance with the fundamental principles of domestic law.” In Nigeria several steps have been taken in order to implement this commitment, including the 2020 Gender and Corruption Study conducted by UNODC of the data emanating from the 2019 and the 2016 National Corruption Surveys.

The workshop brought together for the first time the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and several State Commissioners of Women Affairs with representatives of anti-corruption bodies to review the findings from the gender and corruption study and identify possible policy implications.

Key findings of the study include that women are consistently less likely than men to pay bribes when coming into contact with public officials, and that female public officials are less likely to take bribes than their male colleagues. The report also highlights that, “body currency” (or sextortion) is perceived to be common in Nigeria, but related data remains scarce as victims are reluctant to come forward. Moreover, men were found to be more likely than women to employ bribery or nepotism when seeking public sector employment. Based on these findings, the study concludes that increased gender equality and women empowerment in the public sector is likely to reinforce governance outcomes.

Cecile Tassin Pelzer, EU Head of Cooperation said: “A greater participation of women in public life is essential to the achievement of equality, sustainable development, peace and democracy. Despite this, women are facing obstacles in their political participation. The ongoing reform process presents Nigeria with a unique opportunity to join the league of progressive nations in promoting gender equality”.

Nigeria Launches The National Drug Control Master Plan 2021-2025

The Government of Nigeria has officially launched the National Drug Control Master Plan (NDCMP) 2021-2025. The event was attended by several cabinet ministers, members of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Drug Control, NDLEA Chairman’s Special Purpose Committee on Drugs, the diplomatic corps, as well as diverse group of stakeholders.

Developed with the support of the European Union funded, and UNODC implemented project “Response to Drugs and Related Organized Crime in Nigeria”, the NDCMP 2021-2025 is the final product of a coordinated effort comprising experts from relevant government ministries, departments and agencies as well as civil society organizations. The Plan marks a significant evolution from the previous three NDCMPs, as it was able to draw on an extensive evidence base, including the first ever National Drug Use Survey conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics with the support of UNODC in 2018. The survey revealed an average drug use prevalence of more than 14% which is alarmingly high when compared with the global prevalence of 5.5%.

The survey also found that almost 3 million persons in Nigeria were suffering from some form of drug use disorder. Other research studies on prevalence of drug use among internally displaced persons (IDPs), migrants, students, out of school children, and women, also helped in shaping critical interventions for the Plan.

In his remarks, the Special Guest of Honour HAGF & Minister of Justice, Abubakar Malami, SAN highlighted the critical importance of NDCMP 2021-2025 in providing a clear roadmap for implementing country strategies on all aspects of drug control. The Minister of Women Affairs, Dame Paulen Talen expressed her concerns about one in four drug users being a woman or a girl and hoped that gender concerns would be adequately addressed during implementation of the Plan. The Minister of



Youth and Sports Development, Chief Sunday Dare proposed to engage National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) in drug prevention and sensitization work.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Alexandre Borges Gomes, Charge d Affaires, EU Delegation to Nigeria and ECOWAS, stated that “a balanced approach to issues of drug control” containing both soft and hard measures is the most viable way forward and commended Nigeria for developing such a Plan.

Quoting different research studies conducted on drugs in Nigeria, including the Drug use Survey 2018, the UNODC Representative in Nigeria, Mr. Oliver Stolpe stressed on the strong evidence-base available for the development of this Plan, “an opportunity, that was not available at the time of development of previous three plans ... hence NDCMP 2021-2025 would create superior impact”

Representing Chairman NDLEA Brig. Gen. Mohamed Buba Marwa (Rtd), OFR, Secretary NDLEA, Mr. Shadrach Haruna expressed his agency’s resolve in implementing the NDCMP in close coordination with all the concerned ministries, agencies and departments. He further thanked the European Union for gracious funding and the UNODC for providing technical and advisory support through all stages.

UNICEF's Women Drivers At The Forefront Of Delivering For Children In North-East Nigeria

Whenever she drives around the city of Maiduguri, north-east Nigeria, her eyes fixed on the road, Vivian Ahmed, 39, commands attention. Ahmed, a mother of three is one of a small but growing group of female drivers employed by UNICEF in Nigeria.

Driving from meetings with officials to communities and to camps for internally displaced people around Maiduguri, Ahmed happily facilitates UNICEF's mission to promote and support the wellbeing of conflict-affected children in north-east Nigeria by ensuring that humanitarians have smooth access to people displaced by the ongoing conflict and the communities that often host them, until solutions can be found.

When her journey started early in 2021, the former business-woman doubted the humanitarian community could employ a female driver.

"At first, I was surprised that UNICEF would employ a female driver," said Ahmed from her desk in UNICEF's Maiduguri Field Office. "This gender equality campaign is lifesaving. My family, especially my father and husband, know I love driving. Whenever we went out as a family, I would always be the person to drive.

"Shortly before I applied for the job, my husband had serious health challenges and his treatment wiped out our savings. Our children barely had food to eat. When I got this job, my friends were happy for me because they knew I would be providing for my family," said Ahmed.

"It is reassuring that a woman can work as a driver and still care for her family. Because I love driving and I love children, life has been better than when I was doing other businesses," said Ahmed.

UNICEF's focus on recruiting female drivers in Nigeria was deliberate. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), the current global labour force participation rate is 75 per cent for men and 49 per cent for women. In Nigeria, the labour force's participation rate is 60 per cent for men, and 50 per cent for women.

Phuong T. Nguyen, UNICEF's Chief of Maiduguri Field Office, said women deserve equal opportunities in all job categories.

"Women have a right to sit at every table. The question is if there is a level playing field for them to access these opportunities, both in the public and private sectors," said Nguyen.

"Children benefit the most when women are empowered. We have evidence that empowered women raise healthier children and are able to take informed decisions that benefit their children," said Nguyen.

Indeed, research has linked women's empowerment with better cognitive development, growth and improved nutritional status of children. In north-east Nigeria, UNICEF routinely addresses adolescent girls and female-headed households with capacity building, and vocational and cash support enabling them to take decisions such as enrolling their girls and boys in school and improving their nutritional and health status.

In Adamawa, UNICEF recently trained 6,000 women on the use of the mid-upper arm circumference tape to enable them to detect malnutrition in their children and refer them quickly for often lifesaving treatment.

Last September, UNICEF launched a pilot cash assistance programme for 12,403 internally displaced families, including female-headed households, to enable them to buy essential non-food items. Across the north-east, UNICEF has worked with the state education agencies to support over 8,000 female adolescents and other conflict-affected women with vocational skills for self-reliance.

For Ahmed, a genuine love for driving motivated her application for her new job. This view is shared by Mercy Shooto Jayeola,



Ahmed (right) and Jayeola at Dalori 2 IDP Camp Maiduguri

la, another new female driver at the UNICEF Maiduguri Field Office. Jayeola is also happy her new job allows her to meet and connect with people.

"I first learned to drive a car at a young age. I later got professional training, and I've been driving ever since. Driving is a hobby for me. So, when I saw an opportunity to serve an organisation with goals I care about, I jumped at the chance," she said. But it took more than a love for driving and adventure for Jayeola to relocate from the Nigeria's capital, Abuja, to Maiduguri, the epicentre of a protracted armed conflict that has ravaged north-east Nigeria for more than a decade. It took commitment. The stereotypical perception that driving is a man's job did was also a challenge.

"Some people were happy for me, while others felt driving was a man's job. But I have met many women who were so inspired by my story that they also started commercial driving as a way to earn money for their families. Others frowned at the idea and tried to dissuade me.

"In all, my family have been very supportive. My dad, for instance, calls me almost daily to say prayers and encourage me. I love that I get to take people to their destinations and engage them in meaningful conversation," said Jayeola.

After three months on the job, Ahmed said concerns for her safety from family members have been fully dispelled.

"Working in Borno has been easy, because UNICEF provides all safety measures as well security training for all staff members, so I am not afraid working in an emergency duty station with UNICEF. People are always surprised and excited when I come to pick them up at the airport and they realise that the driver is a woman. They are happy that the world is changing. Hopefully more women will do this," said Ahmed.



UN, Sokoto State Government Work To Reduce Poverty And Enhance Social Protection In The State



Cash Working Group (CWG) Members briefing Beneficiaries

Sokoto State, located in the Sahel zone and the northwest of Nigeria, ranks among the Nigerian states with the lowest human development indices, particularly for health, nutrition and education. However, in the efforts to reduce poverty and vulnerability among the people, the Sokoto State Government initiated various projects and programmes, in partnership with the Federal Government and development agencies.

One of such projects is the UN Joint Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Programme. The Joint SDGs Programme focuses on children, adolescents, the elderly and women – including pregnant and breastfeeding women, while addressing disparities they face in health, education and nutrition, using cash transfers and social health insurance.

By connecting health insurance to a cash transfer programme, the project is exploring innovative routes in social protection, with the double aim to increase impact as well as establishing sustainable, effective and efficient social protection collaboration in Sokoto State.

The SDGs Programme is implemented by four UN agencies: UNICEF (the lead agency), the World Food Programme, the International Labour Organization and the UNDP, as well as the Government of Nigeria.

This initiative targets some 6,000 vulnerable people with Health Insurance Scheme in three Local Government Areas (LGAs) of the state, where the people can access health services free of charge in some designated health facilities in these LGAs: Bodinga, Wamakko and Wurno. The vulnerable groups identified for the Social Health Insurance programme are the aged; people living with disabilities; pregnant women; breastfeeding mothers; children under five years old and adolescent girls.

Of the 6,000 people benefiting from the Free Social Health Insurance programme, some 2,500 pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers and caregivers of children under two years old will receive prepaid cash transfers to help them with transportation fares to the health centres in order to increase the uptake of the free healthcare services at these health facilities.

The growing adoption of government-led cash transfers in adaptable forms globally necessitated setting up the Sokoto State level Cash Working Group in early 2021. The group reports periodically to the state level Technical Working Group (TWG), made up of key high-level government officials. The state level Cash Working Group (CWG), drawn from different Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) in the state, aims to ensure a smooth and effective delivery of social protections programme's objectives in Sokoto State.

The MDAs in the working group are the Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning; the Ministry of Health; the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs and the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education. Others are the Sokoto State Contributory Health Care Management Agency; the State Universal Basic Education Board; the Sokoto Cash Transfer Unit; the Zakaat and Endowment Commission; the Sustainable Development Goals Unit and the Sokoto State Operation and Coordinating Unit.

As part of its key deliverables in the UN Joint SDGs Programme, for the most part of 2021 WFP trained the members of the CWG on a structured coordination of the programme in order to ensure effective and efficient digitisation of the cash transfers and distribution of the prepaid cards to the targeted beneficiaries.

The training programme included conducting a WFP-led capacity needs assessments; hosting virtual and in-person workshops for the CWG members to better understand the cash transfer project design, delivery, and assurance phases and processes; the monitoring and evaluation process, handling/referral of protection related issues as well as the Complaints Feedback Mechanisms (CFM) processes specific to the cash transfer programme.

The trainings resulted in growing awareness and recognition of the need to develop cash working group coordination structures that steer both strategic and technical issues regarding cash-based and voucher intervention programmes in Sokoto state.

The workshops also underscored the need to align these programmes to the National Social Protection Policy, while also leveraging on already existing MDA structures – rather than duplicating them or mounting parallel programmes that, in most cases, are not cost effective.



In North-West Nigeria, Free Health Insurance Scheme Boosts Access To Health Services



Special Adviser to the Sokoto State Governor on the State's Health Contributory Insurance Agency, Hajiya Hammatu Yusuf, presents a health insurance card to a beneficiary.

When 35-year-old Rubabatu Lauwali, mother of four, lost her teaching job, her loss of income meant she couldn't afford basic things in life, including paying for healthcare services for herself and her children.

But all that has now changed. Lauwali recently became a beneficiary of an insurance scheme for vulnerable families funded by the UN Sustainable Development Programme (SDG) Joint Fund. The programme is being implemented in Sokoto State, north-west Nigeria, as a pilot.

A total of 5,500 people will eventually benefit from the health insurance scheme. Out of this number, 5,344 have so far been enrolled in the programme.

"When I first learned about the scheme, I wasn't enthusiastic about coming forward to enroll because I didn't believe it was going to be real. But now that I have my enrolment slip in my hands, I'm convinced and feel happy to be taking part," said Lauwali.

"I've been told that I can visit the clinic anytime I'm sick and present this card and I'll be treated without having to pay anything," said Lauwali, waving her health insurance card.

Amina Hassan, 30, a mother of six children, also expressed relief and joy that she and her children have been enrolled in the free health insurance scheme and can now benefit from health services without paying for them.

"Before, it was difficult for me and my children to access medical services because of our family's lean finances. My father had to come in at one time to help off-set a medical expense of 15,000 Naira. Being enrolled in this scheme is a big relief for all of us," said Hassan.

Mallam Abubakar Mualladi, the Village Head of Gumbi, was present when 270 women, children, elderly, and people with disabilities from four local communities received their health insurance cards at the Gumbi Primary Healthcare Centre. He said the people of the village are now happy they can have unhindered access to health services.

"In this village, some people can't afford to go to the hospital when sick because they have no money. When we had a cholera outbreak, we needed medical help and got some, but it wasn't enough because many of our people didn't have money to pay their health bills. We are relieved that help has now come," said Farouk A. Gumbi, 31, a spokesperson for the Village Head of Gumbi.

"My advice to families is that they should keep their insurance cards very well and turn up at the clinic with them anytime they are sick. With free health services guaranteed under this scheme, they have no excuse anymore not to go to the hospital when sick," said Farouk.

Hammatu Yusuf, Special Adviser to the Sokoto State Governor on the State's Health Contributory Insurance Agency, expressed appreciation for the free health insurance scheme now available to local families, saying she would advocate to the Sokoto State Government to replicate the scheme in all LGAs of the State.

"We will also work with community and traditional leaders, and the media, to raise awareness with communities about the importance of taking advantage of all the services provided under this scheme," said Yusuf.

Isah Ibrahim, Social Policy Specialist at the UNICEF Sokoto Field Office, who represented the UN at the distribution of the health insurance cards in Gumbi, also stressed the importance of community members taking advantage of the benefits of being enrolled in the scheme and going to the hospital with evidence of their enrollment to access services.

Funds for the scheme are provided by the Joint SDG Fund, which is helping support four UN agencies - United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Food Programme (WFP), International Labour Organisation (ILO) and UNICEF - to carry out the project. The two-year UN joint programme, which started in January 2020, aims to strengthen social protection at the federal level in Nigeria, and to contribute to expanding cash transfer and universal health insurance schemes to improve social protection in Sokoto State, especially among vulnerable groups.

Increasing Malnutrition In North-East Nigeria: The Time To Act Is Now

Malnutrition puts the most vulnerable people at risk. In north-east Nigeria, millions of people are “food-insecure”, which means they do not know when or where their next meal will be coming from. People across the region face this threat to survival on a daily basis.



Mothers sit with their children outside Mashamari Stabilization Centre, hoping to have their children admitted for treatment.
Photo: UNICEF/Folashade Adebayo.

Ibrahim, a two-year-old boy from Maiduguri, is in a place that no parent would wish to see their child. He should be playing with his two older siblings in their home in Bolori area, Borno State capital. Instead, to save his life, his mother Falmata, has admitted him to a nutritional stabilization center. A stabilization center (SC) is an in-patient medical facility that treats severely malnourished children with medical complications. Children with these complications are 11 times more at-risk of dying than normal children. Falmata and Ibrahim are in an SC that is managed by Première Urgence Internationale (PUI), located in the Ngarannam Primary Health Care Center (PHCC) in Maiduguri.

Thanks to support from PUI, the Ngarannam PHCC is able to offer free access to health services for thousands of patients a month, mostly internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the surrounding host community.

Immune systems too weak to fight

An estimated 1.14 million children aged 0-59 months are acutely malnourished in the north-east. Levels of acute malnutrition in Borno and Yobe States are the highest recorded since 2016. When people, especially children, are chronically malnourished, their immune systems are weakened, which means they become more susceptible to illnesses that are otherwise preventable in those with stronger immunity.

There is nothing that pains a mother more than watching helplessly as her sick child gets treated; the distress on Falmata's face is evident.

Falmata, 25, dreams for her three children to one day be well-educated. That dream seems far off as she faces the daily struggle of providing them with even basic food needs. Normally, the family is able to eat once per day; on a good day they are able to eat twice, but never do they get the comfort of three meals a day.

Malnutrition cases like Ibrahim's are taking place in a context of a debilitating food security crisis.

Violence and insecurity feed this food crisis

This food security crisis is one of many consequences of the

violent conflict that north-east Nigeria has been plagued with for 12 years. Over two million people across Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states have been displaced by conflict.

Severe acute malnutrition (SAM) admissions in nutrition treatment centers are at the highest levels since surveillance started in 2017. This is caused by high rates of food insecurity due to increased food prices, high prevalence of diarrheal diseases including cholera and the influx of IDPs arriving from inaccessible areas (30% of which have acute malnutrition). In the face of these staggering needs, there are only 32 operational SCs across north-east Nigeria, against a requirement of 80. To put it simply—if there were 100 children suffering from SAM, only an estimated 40 per cent of them would be able to receive the treatment they need.

In Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states, 4.4 million people need food assistance. Fifty per cent of households have reported their food consumption is inadequate. Food insecurity both causes the onset of malnutrition and can also severely complicate recovery efforts. Although the recovery rate for SAM is high after eight weeks of intensive treatment in PUI's outpatient therapeutic programmes (OTP), many patients return to the same food-insecure environment that put them at risk of malnutrition in the first place.

Despite major funding gaps and access challenges, humanitarian actors are working together to deliver life-saving assistance to respond to north-east Nigeria's emergency nutritional needs. The Nutrition Sector coordinates the collective response of government institutions, United Nations agencies, international and national NGOs. Partners have the expertise and willingness to scale-up response activities, but of the USD\$129M required for nutrition in the 2021 Humanitarian Response Plan for Nigeria only 40 per cent has been received.

For children like Ibrahim, and people across north-east Nigeria, this malnutrition crisis is too dangerous for inaction. Others are already mobilized and treating cases but they need all of us to ensure they continue to have the means to save more lives of children suffering from malnutrition.

This is an INTERSOS, UNICEF and OCHA collaboration.

EU, UN Provide Safe And Secure Transit Centre For Returned Nigerian Migrants In Lagos State



High-level officials launch the transit centre for returned Nigerians on 11 November 2021, in Lagos. Photo: IOM/ Styliya Kampani

The European Union (EU) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) commissioned on 11 November a new transit centre for returned Nigerian migrants in Lagos State with support from the European Union. The centre will serve as a reception point for the provision of safe, temporary accommodation, as well as ensure access to social support and specialised services to returned migrants, unaccompanied children, and Victims of Trafficking (VoTs).

The transit centre has the capacity to host up to 400 migrants who can benefit from direct medical assistance, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), counselling, provision of food and a safe, clean, and secure location to rest. Returned migrants accommodated in the facility can stay between two and 12 nights based on their needs. During this time, they can finalise their return plans, contact their family and ensure the existence of social contacts and willingness of their family to receive them back home.

According to the International Aid/Cooperation Officer Migration, Drugs and Organised Crime of the EU Delegation to Nigeria & ECOWAS, Eleni Zerzelidou, “The European Union strongly supports dignified return and sustainable reintegration of migrants who are unable or unwilling to remain in host countries.” Eleni explained further, “The launch of the transit centre is a great opportunity for the EU and IOM to familiarize government partners with migrant protection and assistance processes involved in providing post-arrival assistance to Nigerian returnees.”

Given the protection needs of all categories of vulnerable migrants, IOM has collaborated with Lagos State Emergency Management Agency (LASEMA) and the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI) to establish a transit centre to strengthen the support system through its traditional roles of reception of returning migrants, temporary accommodation during family tracing, and reintegration.

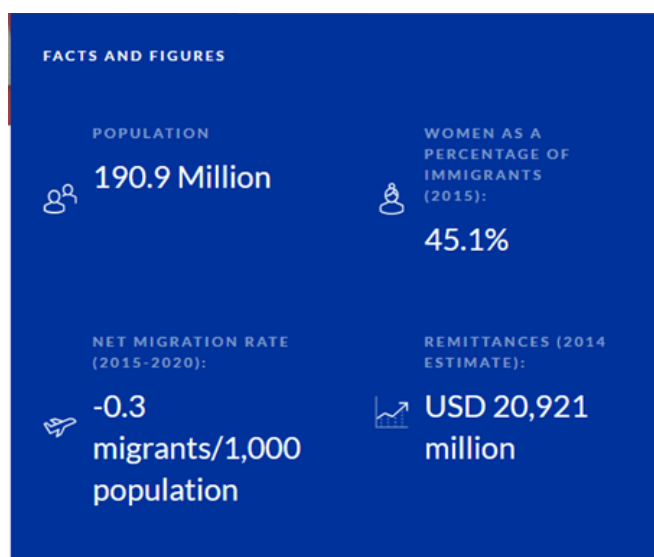
“The main aim is to ensure a smooth transition for migrants returning to their communities of origin. IOM will provide short business skills and entrepreneurship management training to

migrants willing to acquire skills before returning home and help them become more financially independent,” said Prestage Muri-ma, IOM Nigeria Programme Development Coordinator.

IOM, LASEMA and National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI) will run the centre collaboratively, with diverse responsibilities for each entity. IOM has been facilitating the voluntary return of Nigerian migrants stranded in transit and destination countries since 2017, providing the means and skills to meet their needs once back to their local communities under the IOM-EU Joint Initiative.

IOM, in collaboration with the Federal Government of Nigeria and its relevant agencies, has facilitated the reception and post-arrival assistance to more than 22,500 returnees stranded in Libya, Niger, Mali and other African countries to return to Nigeria. Out of those 18,000 returnees came back to Nigeria under the EU-IOM Joint Initiative.

Nigeria is one of the 26 countries that benefit from the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration.



UN, Government of Nigeria Move To Reform Recruitment Processes Of Private Employment Agencies

Arising from observed institutional and operational challenges that pervade the recruitment industry in Nigeria, the Federal Government with support from The International Labour Organization has successfully completed a revision of the Code of Conduct for Private Employment Agencies, introducing revised guidelines to facilitate ethical conduct of licensed recruiters of outsourced personnel.



A group photograph of dignitaries at the training workshop

On 18 and 19 November 2021, stakeholders converged in Abuja to review and validate a revised Code of Conduct for Private Employment Agencies in Nigeria. The event which was organized by The Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment in collaboration with The International Labour Organization signaled the conclusion of a lengthy and extensive process of updating the previous Code of Conduct which was introduced in 2011. The revision process was led by The Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment and supported by The International Labour Organization through the FAIRWAY project and ACCEL Africa projects.

While declaring the event open, Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment, Dr Yerima Tarfa, represented by the Director of the Employment and Wages Department, Mr John Nyamali, identified the Code of Conduct as an important guiding framework to promote fundamental principles and rights at work in Nigeria. He added that the process has been highly participatory, providing opportunity for stakeholders' inputs into the draft revised versions which was periodically circulated by the consultant.

He noted that article two (No. 2) of the International Labour Organization Recommendation (No. 188) urges member States to supplement national laws and regulations applicable to Private Employment Agencies with codes of ethics and self-regulatory mechanisms.

Identifying the daunting challenge paucity of resources play in monitoring activities of the recruitment industry, the Permanent Secretary reiterated the Ministry's resolve to support effectiveness of licensed recruiters, thereby contributing to attaining the overall mandate of the Ministry as it relates to labour and commended The International Labour Organization for supporting the Government of Nigeria in this regard.

Ms Vanessa Phala, Director of The International Labour Organization, Abuja Country Office, during her goodwill message commended the collaborative and consultative approach adopted during the exercise, particularly applauding the Nigeria Employers Consultative Association and the Human Capital Providers Association of Nigeria in providing very helpful insights and guidance to the national consultant who led the revision pro-

cess. Highlighting the importance of ensuring recruitment processes are standardized, especially in the wake of the global pandemic occasioned by COVID-19, Ms Phala further noted that the introduction of the revised Code of Conduct would signal a new dispensation in addressing issues bedeviling the recruitment industry, including persistence in operations of unregistered recruiters. She further appreciated the Swiss and Dutch Governments for supporting the FAIRWAY project and ACCEL Africa projects respectively through which the process was facilitated.

Additional goodwill messages received at the event from Mr Manuel Mühlebach of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Ms Corneila Looije of the Netherlands Embassy and on behalf of Dr Femi Ogunlowo, President of the Human Capital Providers Association of Nigeria, reiterated the exigence of a Code of Conduct specific to the country context, which provides generally agreed principles on operational conduct for Private Employment Agencies.

While Mr Mühlebach noted Switzerland's commitment towards promoting safe labour migration processes as demonstrated through supporting targeted interventions in Nigeria for over a decade, on his part Mr Tunji Balogun speaking on behalf of the President of the Human Capital Providers Association of Nigeria identified the evolution of the recruitment industry in the last decade as a significant justification for reviewing the Code of Conduct to accommodate the new and ever-changing demands and challenges of the business environment.

In 2020, the Human Capital Providers Association of Nigeria identified the need to update the existing Code of Conduct for recruiters as a priority activity, and in March 2021, a stakeholders' meeting to initiate the review process was convened by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment in collaboration with The International Labour Organization.

Amongst other shortcomings of the 2011 document, the inception report of the exercise revealed limited awareness of the existence of the Code of Conduct across various stakeholders, inadequate adherence and application of the normative contents of the document, persistence in operations of unregistered recruiters as well as limited capacity to ensure utmost compliance with standardized recruitment processes...Continue on page 11

UN, Federal Ministry Of Labour And Employment Hold Capacity Building Workshop For Desk Officers



Resource persons and dignitaries at the workshop

The ILO through the ACCEL Africa Project in Nigeria supported the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment in training over 47 FMLE Officers comprising of 36 Labour Desk Officers of the 36 states of the Federation. Amongst the participants were Child Labour Officers from the Child Labour Unit of the Inspectorate Department of the Ministry.

This training which took place on 29 November to 1 December 2021 was aimed at enhancing the national response to eradicating Child Labour towards the achievement of Target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals. More Specifically, the training sought to, build the requisite skill of 37 Child Labour Desk Officers and also equip them on the modalities of implementing the Actions Pledged by the Ministry during the launch of International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour (IYECL).

The training saw the participation of the Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment whom in his remarks, while expressing his thanks to ILO for the support, also pointed out the necessity to ensure continuous intervention in some states in Nigeria where child labour may be an endemic. "Transformation begins with us and at our door if otherwise our country will not be better. We need to think outside the box on how to eradicate child labour" He said.

During the training, participants were privy to relevant insights on current innovations on detecting child labour and other emerging child labour issues. They were encouraged to build positive attitudes and behaviours on the job and develop the right mix of methodologies or technics in Child Labour specific inspections.

The call for effective labour inspection to enforce the provisions of the labour Act was emphasized at the training, backed with data from NBS statistics and the Global report which showed an increase in child labour in the recent times. Data from the report indicated that 70% of children in hazardous work in Agriculture and mining sectors in the global supply chains. Furthermore ILO Made a call for the ratification of convention on

domestic workers (Convention. 189) and the acceleration of the implementation of the NAP to achieve the purpose of the training.

The meeting concluded with the ILO reiterating its continuous commitment and support Eradication of Child Labour, Forced Labour and other forms of modern slavery from workplaces especially the informal sector and households.

UN, FG Move To Reform Recruitment

Processes...continued from page 10

Through series of reviews and consultations, including technical comments from various experts, the fourth draft of the revised document underwent a clause-by-clause consideration upon which Mr Tunji Balogun of the Human Capital Providers Association of Nigeria moved a motion for its validation which was seconded by Ms Loyal Jefferson of The Nigeria Employers Consultative Association.

The validation of the revised Code of Conduct signals the commencement of its operationalization, thus, introducing new and improved set of guidelines for recruiters in Nigeria, contributing to ensuring the advancement of decent work agenda as well as the protection and promotion of all working-class people, including migrant workers.

An overview of the revised Code of Conduct shows an outline that covers guiding principles such as respect for laws, worker's rights, professionalism of Private Employment Agencies and observance of standards on eliminating recruitment fees and related costs, including recommendations of The International Labour Organization Convention (No. 181) and the General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment. It additionally enumerates responsibilities of Private Employment Agencies to stakeholders across the entire recruitment cycle, including during recruitment of migrant workers, disciplinary procedures arising from breaches of any part of the Code of Conduct, as well as the role of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment.

PHOTO NEWS



Captions, from left to right in a clockwise direction

1. First Lady of Nigeria, Dr. Aisha Muhammadu Buhari (Middle); Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Director UNFPA, Dr. Natalia Kanem (5th from the left); Hon. Minister of Women Affairs, Dame Pauline Tallen (5th from the right), during a visit to the First Lady in Abuja, by the UNFPA Executive Director.
2. UNICEF's Women Drivers: Ms. Vivian Ahmed (right) and Ms. Mercy Jayeola at Dalori 2 IDP Camp Maiduguri
3. First Lady of Nigeria, Dr. Aisha Muhammadu Buhari (Right); and Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Director UNFPA, Dr. Natalia Kanem, during a courtesy call on the First Lady in Abuja.

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