



## UN launches Human Dev't Report 2023/2024

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) alongside the Hon. Minister of Finance and Coordinating Economy Chief Wale Edun, on 19 March 2024, launched the 2023/24 Human Development Report (HDR) titled, "Breaking the Gridlock: Reimagining cooperation in a polarized world".

The #HDR2024 reveals a troubling trend: the rebound in the global Human Development Index (HDI) – a summary measure reflecting a country's Gross National Income (GNI) per capita, education, and life expectancy – has been partial, incomplete, and unequal.

PG 03

World Meteorological Day: Nigerians urged to be more responsive to weather and climate alerts

PG 05

UN Agencies, partners recommit to Urgent Action to End Child Marriage

PG 07

Government, UN launch project to improve mangrove ecosystem, livelihoods of forest dependent communities



and more stories.

## continued from cover page:



Mr Mohamed Malick Fall, The United Nations Resident Coordinator in Nigeria during his remarks at the launch



Welcome speech by Ms Elsie Attafuah, the UNDP in Nigeria Country Representative



Hon. Minister of Finance and Coordinating Economy Chief Wale Edun during his remarks at the launch

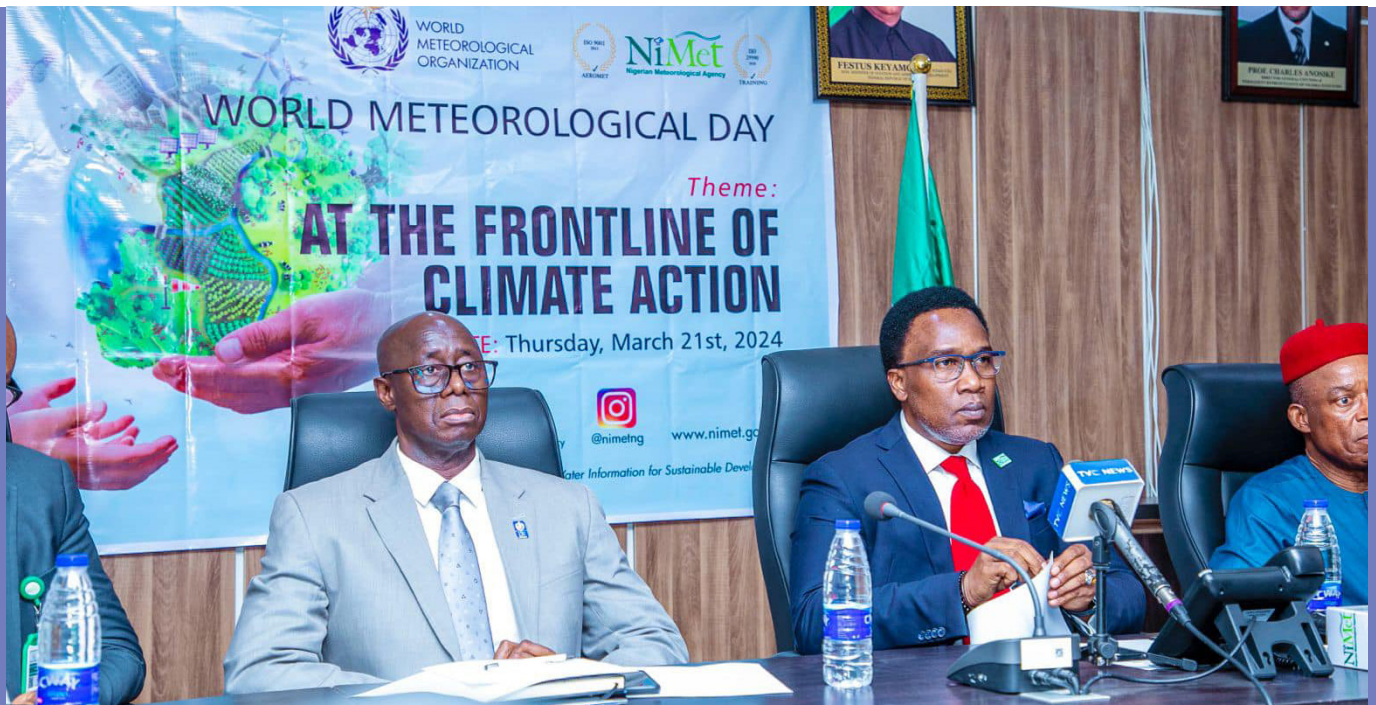
Mr. Edun pointed out that, "This is the 34th year of the report by the UNDP, and of course, it shines a light on all of our shared challenges, opportunities as well as the pursuit of a better world. It's a text whose aim is to "expand the richness of human life" and it takes a robust approach to assess three areas, health, education and standard of living.

UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Mr. Mohamed Fall noted that, "The HDR since its inception, reminds us that our shared aspirations for sustainable economic development need to go beyond just macro-economic indicators and look at people's wellbeing as a whole. Regrettably, according to the last HDR the world recorded its first ever drop in global human development index stopping steady progress in two decades. Mr. Fall further added that, "The HDR, whose launch has brought us together today, shows that the solution to today's challenges is within our reach and it is our duty to fulfil them and leave a better world to succeeding generations.

Present at the launch were the Honourable Minister of State for Labour and Employment- Nkiruku Onyejeocha, Honourable Minister of Youth Development - Dr Jamila Bio Ibrahim, Special Advisor to the President on SDGs- HE Princess Adejoke Orelope - Adefulire and the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Mr. Mohamed M.M Fall.



## World Meteorological Day: Nigerians urged to be more responsive to weather and climate alerts



(L-R) Mr Bernard Gomez, Representative of WMO for North, Central and West Africa, and Professor Charles Anosike, the Director General/ Chief Executive Officer of the Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NiMet) at the commemoration of World Meteorological Day 2024 at NiMet's Headquarters in Abuja

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) recently spearheaded a global call to action on climate change, marking World Meteorological Day with the theme, "At the Frontline of Climate Action." The day commemorates the establishment of WMO on the 23rd of March 1950 and highlights the vital role National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHSs) play in ensuring societal safety and well-being.

This year's celebration which was marked on the 21 March however, had a more urgent focus. Professor Celeste Saulo, Secretary-General of WMO in her press statement declared "Climate change is no longer a distant threat, its effects are being felt around the world, and the window for action is rapidly closing." The celebration witnessed the release of the State of the Global Climate 2023 report with the following highlights:

- 2023 confirmed as hottest year on record by clear margin.
- Records broken for ocean heat, sea level rise, Antarctic Sea ice loss and glacier retreat.
- Extreme weather undermines socio-economic development.
- Renewable energy transition provides hope, and
- Cost of climate inaction is higher than cost of climate action.

"We can navigate the challenges of climate change and ensure a healthy planet for generations to come," said Mr. Bernard Gomez, Representative of WMO Office for North, West and Central Africa who joined the Nigerian Meteorological Agency, (NiMet) to celebrate the World Meteorological Day in Abuja, Nigeria.

Gomez said the shifting weather phenomena from heat waves, thunderstorms and thick dust haze happening within a short period in the country, are indication of a changing climate which calls for concerted



Professor Charles Anosike, the Director General/ Chief Executive Officer of the Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NiMet)



efforts by NiMet to be more vigilant and for communities to be responsive to weather forecasts and alerts.

The Director-General of NiMet, Prof Charles Anosike in his remarks during the event noted that Climate change poses an existential threat to our planet, exacerbating extreme weather events, disrupting ecosystems, and endangering vulnerable communities. He said it had become imperative for NiMet to increase efforts towards building a weather and climate-resilient society, enhance our preparedness for weather-related disasters, and to promote sustainable development practices at all levels of government.

To emphasize the required urgency, WMO partnered with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to launch a new climate action campaign involving narrated weather highlights by young children. The campaign tagged "Weather Kids" was broadcasted on television, social media, and at the WMO headquarters itself, emphasizing the need for ambition, commitment, and action from both policymakers

and individuals.

According to the DG, NiMet is sustaining awareness and continuous education on climate and climate change related issues through its Young Meteorological Ambassador Programme in Nigeria which is part of a global collaboration between National meteorological services, weather presenters, children and media outlets worldwide to amplify the 2024 WMD Celebration theme "At the Frontline of Climate Action."

World Meteorological Day 2024 served as a stark reminder of the challenges posed by climate change. However, the day also offered a glimpse of hope. By working together, stakeholders can take decisive action to protect our planet.

The event was attended by representatives of invited Heads of Agencies, media organizations, and school children from different schools in Abuja who rendered poetries depicting the theme of the celebration.





# UN Agencies, partners recommit to Urgent Action to End Child Marriage



R-L Minister of Women Affairs Barr. Uju Kennedy- Ohanenye, Ibrahim Sesay (UNICEF Nigeria, Koessan Kuawu Deputy Representative UNFPA Nigeria, Kwara First Lady and Head of Governor's Spouses Forum Dr. Mrs Olufolake Abdulrazaq, Unicef Nigeria Resident Representative Cristian Munduate and permanent secretary ministry of women affairs.

The UN system in Nigeria alongside government, development and humanitarian partners have agreed on the need for urgent action to eradicate Child Marriage in Nigeria by 2030. The renewal of cooperation and collaboration was made in Abuja on February 16 during the National Dialogue on Ending Child Marriage conference.

The dialogue represented a significant stride towards eradicating child marriage in Nigeria by fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholders to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5.3, which targets the elimination of child marriage by 2030.

Child marriage remains a critical issue affecting the development and well-being of adolescent girls globally, with Nigeria ranking third in the prevalence of child brides. Its prevalence remains high in the country, with 44% of girls married before the age of 18, totaling over 24 million

child brides and ranking third globally. Although recent data suggests a decline in national prevalence from 44% to 30%, progress has been slow and uneven, particularly affecting the poorest households, rural areas, and girls with little or no education.

With four out of every ten girls in Nigeria being married before the age of 18, and a current scenario of around 25 million child brides with prevalence in Bauchi, Jigawa, and Zamfara states, partners were equivocal on the need to eradicate it and set girls on a path to a brighter future where they could achieve their full potential(s).

UNICEF Nigeria Resident Representative Ms. Cristian Munduate presented insights on the economic impact of child marriage with consequences culminating into an economic burden of 10bn Dollars. Citing a joint study conducted by UNICEF and the Federal Ministry of Women



Panelist Sheikh Nurudeen Lemu shared his thoughts on how partners can work with traditional and religious leaders to end child marriage in their domains.



Former First Lady of Rivers State Justice Eberechi Wike



Affairs which highlighted that eliminating child marriage could lead to a substantial 25% increase in GDP, she emphasized the urgent need for increased investment in children's education to address the associated human rights and socio-economic challenges. She also underscored the importance of creating a better future for children by eliminating child marriage.

Reflecting on the successes of the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage, UNFPA Nigeria Deputy Representative Mr. Koessan Kuawu reiterated the importance of empowering girls to know and exercise their human rights- including their right to choose, as adults, whether, when and whom to marry- which was necessary for them to contribute tangible results to nation-building.

While launching the P-BAT Cares 4 Women E-Market Portal-a women empowerment pathway for ending child marriage, the minister of Women Affairs Barr Uju Kennedy-Ohanenye emphasized the need to prioritize the protection of women and girls and set them on the course for a sound future. She also called for strengthening of partnerships that would enhance an increase in legal frameworks that protect girls, access to education and empowerment.

#### Panel Discussions

The event featured a total of 3 panel discussions and recommendations for community-driven solutions and strategies that would result in increased support for ending child marriage.

Panelists stressed the need for advocacy focusing on a cultural shift through the challenging of traditional norms and beliefs that perpetuate child marriage.

To consolidate of the current drive, there are plans for the review and development of a National Strategy, cost-effective action plan and resource mobilization commitments. These will drive significant advancements and ensure meaningful progress in ending child marriage in Nigeria by 2030.

#### About the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage

The primary goal of the Global Programme is to contribute significantly to the realisation of SDG target 5.3, both directly in the 12 Global Programme countries and indirectly in other countries influenced by the Global Programme methodology, technical resources, data, evidence, and knowledge. The Global Programme, in its third phase (2024–2030), aims to support governments and civil society partners, including women- and youth-led organisations and feminist movements, to accelerate action to end child marriage. At the heart of the theory of change is an adolescent girl-centred approach that aims to empower individual adolescent girls to make decisions about if, when, and whom to marry, within a web of support that involves her family, the community (including boys and men), service providers, society, and public.



Minister of Women Affairs flanked by first ladies of Kwara and Kogi State.



## Government, UN launch project to improve mangrove ecosystem, livelihoods of forest dependent communities



(L-R) Director, UN Information Centre (UNIC), Ronald Kayanja; Rwandan Ambassador to Nigeria H.E. Ambassador Christophe Bazivamo

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in Nigeria have launched a project to lift the barriers to sustainable mangrove ecosystems management by increasing resilience of communities' livelihoods in mangrove landscapes, as part of efforts to sustainably mitigate the impacts of climate change in the country.

The project "Integrated management of mangrove ecosystems and expansion of social protection for fisheries and forest dependents in the coastal communities of Cross Rivers State, Nigeria" is funded by the Government of the United Kingdom (UK) Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), under the Partnering for Accelerated Climate Transitions (PACT).

The project, a technical assistance to the government of Nigeria, under implementation by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) seeks to support enhance mangrove rehabilitation, conservation and utilization for biodiversity conservation, thus fostering inclusive economic growth and creating sustainable livelihoods to forest dependent communities.

At the launch of the project in Abuja, the FAO representative in Nigeria and to ECOWAS Dominique Koffy Kouacou said "the delicate balance between conservation and sustainable use of this ecosystem is of pressing concern, especially given the increasing threats from deforestation, firewood, and timber collection, that have leads to mangrove ecosystem degradation".

To which he noted the economic reliant of the people living in coastal communities, to mangrove forest resources such as fisheries, is important. "The outcome of this project will not only reduce pressure on mangrove ecosystem but also promote alternative nature-based livelihoods among the fisheries dependent communities," Kouacou said.

At the launch of the project Martine Sobey Climate Change and Nature Team Lead for FCDO underscored the importance of the mangrove to Nigeria habitat and biodiversity. Noting that "it is about protecting the loss of mangroves from pollution over-harvesting for a few kinds of wood, helping communities that depend on those mangroves for fish and their livelihoods, and finding a sustainable way for communities to live and protect mangroves in the long term", she stated.

In his statement the Director General of the National Council on Climate Change (NCCC), Dr. Salisu Dahiru said this is another milestone to Nigeria's declaration of its net zero commitment made at COP 26 in Scotland. "This furthers institutional strengthening by deepening research, adaptive management practices, and collaboration among stakeholders".

"Nature-based solutions are a critical component of Nigeria's NDC and Long-Term Low-Emission Development Strategy Document launched last year at COP28 in Dubai, which will drive Nigeria towards Net Zero by 2060", Dr. Dahiru said.

Beside the aim to lift the barriers to sustainable mangrove ecosystems management by increasing the climate resilience of communities' livelihoods in mangrove landscapes and supporting biodiversity conservation, the project will also contribute to the delivery of Nigeria's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to greenhouse gas (GHG) mitigation and develop ambitious action on climate mitigation.



# International Women's Day Celebration: National Assembly calls for Gender-Inclusive Governance



Madam Beatrice Eyong, UN Women Nigerian Country Representative speaking on a panel with other key panelists. Photo: UN Women/ Unwana Umosen

UN Women, with support from the Government of Canada and Norway, organized an International Women's Day Conference in collaboration with the Special Assistant to the Speaker on Women's Affairs. The conference aligned with key areas of UN Women's Mandate, focusing on advocacy for gender bills, support for the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, efforts to enhance female representation at national and state assemblies, the promotion of gender-responsive budgeting and the launch of the Bridge Her Gap Campaign.

"We need to recognize and include women in peace processes in order for it to last," said, UN Women Country Representative, Madam Beatrice Eyong, while also emphasizing the need for realistic funding mechanisms for women's participation and safety in national peace and security.

In conversation with other key panelists, Madam Eyong highlighted the significance of ensuring that no one is left behind in efforts to reduce conflict. This involves prioritizing inclusion in all aspects of development, including the involvement of youth, women living with disabilities, and those affected by HIV/AIDS, in resource allocation, positions, and decision-making.

"Inclusion means ensuring that every woman and girl in Nigeria has access to education, healthcare, economic opportunities, and political participation. It is about dismantling the barriers that historically sideline women from decision making and acknowledging their unique challenges," said the Honorable Abbas Tajudeen, the Speaker of the House of Representatives. He also noted that women's economic empowerment in Nigeria is pivotal for national development and sustainable economic growth and expressed his involvement in promoting gender equality for women in Nigeria.

Enhancing women's political representation and participation is vital for achieving a more inclusive, balanced, and democratic society. While there has been an increase in women's participation in the

political sphere over the years, it still falls short of the desired level. It is time to translate the qualified and competent women in Nigeria to positions of leadership and decision-making.



Madam Beatrice Eyong, UN Women Nigeria Country Representative giving her keynote speech. Photo: UN Women/ Unwana Umosen.



Honorable Abbas Tajudeen, the Speaker of the House of Representatives giving his remarks during the international women's day conference. Photo: UN Women/ Unwana Umosen.



# Uniting communities for accelerated progress



HRH Oba Semiudeen Kasali addressing the women of Igbo kingdom at the community dialogue Photo: UN Women Nigeria/Oluoma Ali

Traditional rulers play an important role in empowering women and ending harmful practices against them within their communities. Recognizing the influence these leaders wield, UN Women, with support from the Ford Foundation, organized community dialogues across Nigeria during International Women's Month.

In the heart of Igbo, Ikorodu, Lagos State, International Women's Day 2024 wasn't just a celebration; it was a powerful moment of unity and empowerment. Led by HRH Oba Semiudeen Kasali, women in the community came together through the UN Women Nigeria and the Ford Foundation LEAP Project to stand up for women's rights.

The discussions revolved around the vital role women play in national development and particularly their contributions to the economic growth of Nigeria. HRH Oba Semiudeen Kasali, a strong believer in equality, promised to support women entrepreneurs and end harmful cultural norms that hold them back. Amidst stories of resilience and sisterhood, women exchanged invaluable insights on achieving work-life balance, nurturing both personal and professional growth.



A Group photograph of HRM Amb. Dr. Uchua Amos Uyumulam Item JP with participants at the community dialogue. Photo: UN Women/ Unwana Umosen

In Becheve Community, Cross River State, the community dialogue was led by HRM Amb. Dr. Uchua Amos Uyumulam Item JP. The dialogue focused on the importance of survivors of "Money Woman Practice taking advantage of second-chance initiatives championed by local chiefs. Participants shared how they've benefited from these initiatives and are now able to afford their basic needs, support their families, and save money for business investments.

"Money woman no dey Becheve again" HRM stated, emphasizing women's rights and the success of halting 'money wife' in the community as a foundation for addressing broader community issues. He stated that cooperation and men's inclusion in sensitization efforts are needed now more than ever.

Rivers state witnessed a transformational event led by HRH King Dr. Appolus Chu of Nchia-Elleme Kingdom. During the event, he thanked UN Women for their tireless efforts in promoting women's empowerment and urged community members to take the message down to the grassroots, emphasizing the critical role of women in society. Continuing his commitment, HRH distributed cash transfers and agricultural input support to 250 women in the community, a practical step towards their empowerment.

UN Women Country Representative Madam Beatrice Eyong, represented by UN Women Programme Officer, Prevention and Mitigation Service, Ibrahim Nurudeen, expressed gratitude to HRH for taking ownership of the community dialogue and for the massive support he has shown towards women in his community. The representative of the Ministry of Women Affairs, commended UN Women and Ford Foundation for bringing these initiatives to the women of Eleme. Stating that the empowerment initiatives led by HRH will go a long way to reduce the suffering of the women in Eleme.

These community dialogues served as a reminder on the importance of communities to stand together for equality and prosperity. It showed that by working together and investing in women, we can accelerate progress in communities because women remain the backbone of a prosperous nation.



## NBS, UN collaborate to train stakeholders on child labour and social protection statistics



The Director of the ILO Abuja Country Office for Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Liaison Office for ECOWAS, Dr Vanessa Phala, expressed the need for accelerated actions toward supporting the subnational governments in understanding child labour indicators and social protection statistics. She made the statement during a three-day training held in Akure, Ondo State, adding that the focus of the project was to ensure the elimination of child labour in response to Africa's social protection strategy.

Speaking through Emmanuel Danjuma - National Project Coordinator, GALAB, Phala said that child labour remained a persistent problem in the world today as revealed by the latest global statistics, which indicated that 160 million children (sixty-three million girls and ninety-seven million boys) were in child labour as at the beginning of 2020. This, according to her, accounted for almost 1 in 10 of all children worldwide. She regretted that Seventy-nine (79) million children, half of all those in child labour, were in hazardous work that directly endangers their health, safety, and moral development.

Statistics also indicated that there were now more children in child labour in sub-Saharan Africa than in the rest of the world combined, of which Nigeria faced a greater burden as the most populated country in the region. She stated that ILO and UNICEF provided evidence-based policy implications that promote social protection like access to healthcare and income security, as well as policies that promote decent work and gender equality in the reduction of child labour.

On social protection coverage, she regretted that only 11 percent of the population of Nigeria has social protection coverage with only 5 percent affiliated to health insurance, the lowest in the sub-Saharan Africa. To ensure the extension of coverage to forty percent by 2025 and to ensure the elimination of child labour in response to the Africa social protection strategy, there was a need for accelerated action toward supporting the subnational government in understanding child labour indicators and data sources through household surveys.

Against this background that the GALAB project was facilitating innovative actions at the subnational level towards meeting the 2030 sustainable development goals, target 8.7, to take immediate and effective measures to eliminate child labour and forced labour.

In Nigeria, the project intensified actions on policies that would promote social protection programme especially access to healthcare by individuals and households at risk of child labour. The project would achieve this goal by strengthening the capacity of the stakeholders identified as critical in the elimination of child labour.

Twenty-five (25) officials from the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment, State Bureau of Statistics, State Operations Coordinating Unit, State Contributory Health Commission, Nigeria Social Insurance Trust Fund, Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), Trade Union Congress (TUC), and civil society organizations in Ondo state participated in the training.

In her remarks, Olanike Mogboruko, the Ondo State Controller, Federal Ministry of Labour, and Employment, called on stakeholders to increase efforts towards child-specific protection measures by reducing family poverty risks and vulnerability, supporting livelihoods and social enrolment, amongst, other things.

Olufemi Olorundipe, the Ondo state Statistician General, who also spoke at the training workshop, said that the training was a laudable activity adding that the State Bureau of Statistics was one of the stakeholders in the project. He pledged the commitment of the State Government to do the best to ensure the capturing of accurate data that would project the status of child labour in Ondo state. He wanted governments to ensure compulsory education through the instrumentality of the law.

In his remarks, the Ondo state Chairperson of Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), Victor Amoko, called on all stakeholders to unite in the battle against child labour in the state if child labour must end.



## IFAD Associate Vice President's mission to Nigeria strengthens cooperation between Nigeria and UN



L-R Dr. Bernard Hien, Regional Director, West and Central Africa (WCA) Division IFAD, Dr. Donal Brown, Associate Vice President of the IFAD, Rome, Resident Coordinator of the UN, Dr. Mohamed Fall, Dr. Yaya O. Olaniran, Nigeria's IFAD Executive Board Member and Permanent Representative to the UN Food and Agriculture Agencies in Rome and Ms Dede Ekoue, Country Director IFAD Nigeria during a visit to the UN House in Abuja.

The Associate Vice President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Rome, Dr. Donal Brown, was on an official mission to Nigeria organized in partnership with the Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Senator Abubakar Kyari. The mission which was from 11-16 March, 2024 deepened the partnership between the Federal Government of Nigeria and IFAD in support of government efforts aimed at food system transformation for food and nutrition security, improved livelihoods of smallholder farmers and inclusive agro-industrialization.

Dr Brown met key officials and partners, including Vice President of Nigeria H.E Senator Kashim Shettima, Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Senator Abubakar Kyari, Honourable Minister of State Agriculture and Food Security, Senator Aliyu Sabi Abdullahi, Honourable Minister of Budget and National Planning, Senator Abubakar Atiku Bagudu, Executive Governor of Enugu, Dr. Peter Mbah and Executive Governor of Benue State, Rev. Fr. Hyacinth Alia, Development Partners, farmers and private sector.

Dr Brown also undertook a field visit to Enugu where he exchanged with the H.E the Executive Governor of Enugu, Dr. Peter Mbah and engaged with small-scale farmers in rural community of Nenwe in Aninri local government area supported by IFAD funded Value Chain Development project. The field visit confirmed the positive impact on the ground of the cooperation between Federal Government of Nigeria and IFAD. It also highlighted the strong commitment of the Enugu

State Government to inclusive smallholder farmers centered agri-food systems. The visit also recognized the ownership of the VCDP initiatives by communities and helped to identify pathways to enhance the results of cooperation.

Since 1985, IFAD's Cooperation with the FGN helped financed 12 projects for a total of \$ 1.5 billion, including \$ 546.59 million from IFAD's own resources, directly benefitting nearly 3,912,180 million Nigerian rural households. Nigeria has the largest portfolio in West and Central Africa and the second largest in all of Africa. IFAD has been Nigeria's trusted partner for reducing rural poverty and continues to partner with the Nigerian Government in developing agricultural value chains, establishing community-driven development initiatives, developing profitable smallholder agri-businesses, building rural institutions, and pursuing financial inclusion for rural poor households.

Speaking during a high-level meeting with the Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Sen, Abubakar Kyari, in Abuja, Dr Brown said Nigeria is a key partner of the UN organization, adding that he was in the country to assess existing IFAD projects and areas of further collaboration.

"Nigeria is one of our strongest partners and part of my mission is to try to strengthen and deepen that partnership. Not only is my mission to strengthen our relationship but secondly is to look at the future direction of support that IFAD can provide the government," the IFAD Vice President said.



In his remarks at the high-level meeting, the Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Sen Kyari, expressed gratitude to IFAD for massive food security support and due diligence in the existing operations of FGN/IFAD Portfolio.

“The smooth implementation of the Livelihood Improvement Family Enterprise – Niger Delta (LIFE-ND), Value Chain Development Program (VCDP) Additional Financing (AF) and Special Agro-Industrial Processing Zone (SAPZ) Program underscores the unique quality of our strategic partnership”.

The IFAD Vice President participated in a portfolio review of IFAD/FGN cooperation programme and provided guidance on strategic matters for scaling up the impact of the partnership. He also attended the Nigeria-IFAD Cooperation Open House and Exhibition fair alongside the Honourable Minister of State Agriculture and Food Security, Senator Aliyu Sabi Abdullahi. They took a tour of the exhibition of products of various value chains by IFAD funded projects. About 100 farmers from 15 states exhibited their agricultural products including processed foods.

The IFAD Vice President and the Honourable Minister of State Agriculture and Food Security co-chaired a gender dialogue with the 2024 International Women’s Day theme “Investing in Women: Accelerate Progress” to dialogue with 100 small scale farmers and processors. This activity was also done in collaboration with UN Women Representative Dr Beatrice Eyong, World Food Program and UNHCR with technical support of Dr. Priscilla Achakpa, International Gender and Climate Change Expert. This dialogue with farmers concluded on the urgent need to scale-up investment in women in agriculture especially considering the current food and nutrition security crisis. The dialogue also resulted in several strategic recommendations that will be shared with the government, development partners, farmers organizations, private sector partners, civil society organizations and media in the coming weeks.



L-R Dr. Bernard Hien, Regional Director, West and Central Africa (WCA) Division IFAD, Dr. Donal Brown, Associate Vice President of the IFAD, Rome, Senator Abubakar Kyari, Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Food Security and Dr. Yaya O. Olaniran, Nigeria’s IFAD Executive Board Member and Permanent Representative to the UN Food and Agriculture Agencies in Rome during a visit to the Honourable Minister recently in Abuja.



# UN poised to reposition Nigeria's culture and creative industries



The UNESCO Abuja Office has initiated and embarked on a project aimed at repositioning Nigeria's culture and creative industries. This laudable initiative was informed by its partnership reached with the world Bank Group's International Finance Corporation (IFC). After bilateral talks with the world Bank Group, there was an agreement to launch an intervention into the culture and creative industry in Nigeria aimed at supporting the continued growth of the sector.

For a start, the partnership organized a successful National Dialogue on Nigeria's Cultural and Creative Industries in Lagos-Nigeria, which held October 4 – 6 2023. The dialogue, which turned out a convocation of multi-level stakeholders from encompassing milieu of Nigeria's culture and creative industries, deliberated on growth of the sector as well as the enhancement of its capacity to contribute to the country's sustainable economic development.

The national dialogue, therefore, aimed at setting the foundation upon which the intervention can effectively commence, as well as provide veritable platform for constructive engagement between the industry actors and the newly created Federal Ministry of Arts, Culture and Creative Economy (FMACCE).

Outcome of the 3-days dialogue was a resounding statement of commitment to boosting economic growth, protection of Nigeria's rich and diverse cultural manifestations.

The dialogue looked at the overall inherent benefits of the cultural and creative industries, which ranged from job creation and employment opportunities, contribution to GDP and foreign exchange earnings, tourism and investment potentials, development of associated industries supply and value chain, preservation of cultural heritage, indigenous knowledge and diverse cultural expressions, safeguard of cultural diversity and promotion of cultural dialogue, cultural exchange, national identity and social cohesion.

The dialogue also considered the challenges therein, such as lack of

infrastructure and limited access to funding and resources, inadequate intellectual property protection, dearth of training and capacity building opportunities.

In the end, the dialogue acknowledged fact that Nigeria's enormous potential and cultural capital are essential to the country's sustainable development and identity. However, Nigeria truly as the giant of Africa must rise and take advantage of these priceless resources to improve the lives of the teeming population, especially the young people.

Therefore, the people and government of Nigeria was called upon to establish strong institutional frameworks, offering strategic financing, develop requisite infrastructure and capacities, and encourage co-operation. When this call is heeded, the benefits will be numerous, including job creation, eradication of poverty, diversification of the oil-concentrated economy, social cohesion, and use of soft power in international relations and diplomacy.

After the dialogue, a position paper was compiled and presented to the Honourable Minister of Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy, Hannatu Musa Musawa at the Office of the Head of Office UNESCO Abuja Office, Mr Abdourahmane Diallo on January 10, 2024.



# UN strengthens capacity of Nigerian military to protect cultural property



Within the framework of the implementation of the 1954 UNESCO Convention on the Protection of Cultural Heritage in the Event of Armed Conflict, UNESCO Abuja Office collaborated with the Office of the Chief of Defence Staff and the National Commission for UNESCO Nigeria to implement a capacity building workshop to strengthen the ability of Nigerian military personnel to protect cultural property in the event of armed conflict.

The training was two-prong. The first component of the activity saw participation of middle level officers from the Nigerian Army and Nigerian Navy during the capacity building for female military officers at the African continental level, which took place in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo. UNESCO Abuja Office supported the participation of the Nigerian officers at the Kinshasa event.

The second component of the activity was the capacity building of twenty middle level officers of the Nigerian military working in the vicinity of the Sukur Cultural World Heritage Site.

As a step-down training from the African region capacity building organized in Kinshasa, Congo DR, the workshop in Yola, Adamawa State equipped participants with specialized capacity to identify and protect movable and immovable cultural heritage in the event of armed conflict.

Speaking at the workshop in Yola, Lieutenant Colonel D. Adewa expressed delight in the exposition to UNESCO Standard setting instruments regarding cultural property in the event of armed conflict. He was particularly happy with Mr. Ifeanyi Ajaegbo, one of the UNESCO

Experts and resource personality at the workshop, who took participants on a voyage of the Blue Shield, origin and events that culminated in the development of the emblems for the protection of cultural property.

The emblems were developed owing to the negative impact of crisis and emergencies on cultural property from the earliest times of recorded history. He was hopeful UNESCO Abuja Office will further engage the top echelon of the Nigerian military in command and control of operations for similar training.





## Ukrainian grain donation bolsters WFP's response in Northeast Nigeria amidst inflation and food price spikes



The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) today welcomes a generous donation of 25,000 tons of wheat from the Government of Ukraine that will help provide emergency food assistance to 1.3 million crisis-affected people in northeast Nigeria.

This vital contribution – part of Ukraine's humanitarian “Grain from Ukraine” initiative launched by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy – arrives as prices of staple food in Nigeria have risen, pushing basic meals out of the reach of millions of vulnerable families across the country. The shipment was made possible thanks to a collaborative effort from Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Luxembourg, Norway, Republic of Korea, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, which has helped cover the costs of transporting the wheat from Ukraine to Nigeria and its distribution to the families who so urgently need it.

“We extend our heartfelt thanks to the Government of Ukraine, partners, and donors for their unwavering support through the Grain from Ukraine Initiative,” said David Stevenson, WFP Representative and Country Director in Nigeria. “This collaborative effort plays a crucial role in alleviating suffering and maintaining human dignity in areas facing conflict and food price increase”.

As part of WFP's ongoing humanitarian operations, the wheat donation will be combined with cash and other commodities to meet the basic food and nutrition needs of crisis-affected women, men and children for a two-month period.

Deadly conflicts and persistent violence in northeast Nigeria have driven millions of people out of their homes, off their farms and across the region, jeopardizing agriculture and livelihoods production.

Over the past three months, unlike in previous years, prices of key staples across several markets in Nigeria increased above pre-harvest levels hampering food access for vulnerable families who depend on harvest and markets for their supplies. In Maiduguri, for example, the wholesale prices of red beans have increased by 210 percent com-

pared to the same period last year (February 2023). Similarly, prices of maize and sorghum increased by 176 percent and 188 percent respectively.

The country is also grappling with its fourth consecutive year of chronic food insecurity with 26.5 million people across the country projected to face acute hunger during the 2024 lean season between June and August according to the November 2023 Cadre Harmonisé food security analysis.

WFP is committed to working with the government and partners to build more resilient, inclusive, and effective food systems taking advantage of its current footprint in the country. Through its “Out of Conflict into Solutions” food systems approach, WFP seeks to prioritize emergency food assistance to the most vulnerable groups while simultaneously supporting self-reliance by rebuilding assets to improve long-term food security and resilience including adaptation to climate change, providing timely access to nutritious food, and promoting innovative financing to support WFP operations.

In 2023, WFP invested US\$ 200 million in agricultural economy through locally purchased food and cash transfers to crisis-affected families for food redemption in local markets.

“WFP has the tools and willingness to support the government in restoring and unlocking the agricultural potential of northeast Nigeria making it again the breadbasket of the country. But we cannot achieve this alone. Collective action is needed to bring peace and stability, ensure stable markets, encourage financial investments, and generate employment through enhanced collaboration with Nigerian private sector partners, suppliers, transporters, service providers, and retailers” Stevenson added.



# Men as allies: Ending violence against women and girls



Participants during the training in Maiduguri on Engaging Men through Accountable Practices (EMAP) to end Gender-Based Violence. @UNHCR/Francis Garriba.

In North East Nigeria, violence against women and girls (VAWG) profoundly impacts the lives of women and girls, leading to severe psycho-social consequences. Survivors often face both physical and emotional trauma, with unwanted pregnancies being a notable repercussion. These challenges are exacerbated by forced displacement and its associated hardships, such as poverty and restricted access to essential services, compelling women and girls towards harmful coping strategies, including the sale and exchange of sex.

Tackling gender-based violence (GBV) demands a comprehensive strategy that encompasses a multi-faceted approach like policy reforms, educational initiatives, community involvement, and robust social support services. These efforts aim to empower survivors and alter societal attitudes that continue to enable such violence. In response, UNHCR and partners have rolled out a GBV prevention strategy known as Engaging Men through Accountable Practices (EMAP), specifically designed to involve men in the prevention of violence against women and girls.

"To sharpen our response to gender-based violence, UNHCR introduced the EMAP initiative in Borno and Adamawa States—areas deeply scarred by humanitarian crises and where GBV emerges as a critical issue. This training engages humanitarian professionals in the two States with a view of driving a profound shift towards positive behavioural change," says Ms Zelinda Aromorach, UNHCR GBV Officer. Recognising the importance of engaging men as allies in the fight against violence against women and girls, EMAP aims to foster positive masculinity and encourage men to become allies in the promotion of the safety and well-being of women and girls. In this regard, UNHCR

facilitated a training of trainers' session designed to equip its staff and those of its partner, Borno Women Development Initiative (BOWDI), with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively engage men in preventing violence against women and girls. Through this training, UNHCR aims to deepen understanding of men's roles as advocates and supporters, ultimately aiming to challenge traditional gender norms and promote positive behavioural change within communities.

This proactive approach is in line with UNHCR's commitment to addressing the root causes of gender-based violence and fostering a more inclusive and protective environment for all, regardless of gender. Integrating EMAP into existing GBV programming demonstrates UNHCR's commitment to enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of interventions in North East Nigeria.

The training benefited participants like Aisha Abdulrahman, BOWDI Senior Programmes Manager, who says that men's involvement will fast-track the efforts toward ending GBV. Aisha says men's involvement in the fight against GBV makes them evaluate their own actions and enhances their accountability to become allies.

"What bothers me about GBV is that there is no certainty about where and when it will happen. All we can do is prevent it by sensitising the masses and adopting behavioural change interventions like EMAP," says Aisha.

Engaging and involving men in the fight against GBV also means that they should help in ensuring that women and girls participate in decision-making and have equal rights to education. Arrister Hassan Usman, a Programme Officer with BOWDI, advocates for men to embrace roles traditionally reserved for women, asserting this would not diminish their stature. He emphasizes the importance of engaging with men who uphold traditional norms to end violence against women and girls. Usman believes in the necessity of diplomacy and tact to change mindsets and highlights EMAP as a crucial tool for initiating this dialogue.

"What worries me is the fact that there is little I can do alone to reverse the situation and help survivors and their families. We must, therefore, combine forces to ensure that support is effectively given and that engaging men begins to make them accountable to women and girls to create a GBV-free community," he concludes.



Aisha Abdulrahman, BOWDI Senior Programme Manager. @UNHCR/Francis Garriba.



## Collective responsibility: Ensuring protection and solutions for refugees in Nigeria



Laban supervises the training of refugee women and girls by GSI in Adagom refugee settlement, Cross River State. © UNHCR/ Lucy Agiende.

Forcibly displaced individuals confront a journey fraught with challenges, far beyond the immediate concerns of shelter and safety. Rebuilding their lives in the aftermath of upheaval means navigating a complex landscape of uncertainty and fear. It's a process that demands resilience and determination. This path involves piecing together the fragments of their disrupted lives, crafting a new narrative where they can once again look forward with hope and confidence and assert control over their destinies.

"When I left Cameroon for Nigeria in 2019, I was devastated and had no idea of what would become of my aspirations and family. I virtually lost everything but was lucky enough to find a place to call home," says Laban, a Cameroonian refugee in Adagom refugee settlement, Cross River State.

The UNHCR is dedicated to finding sustainable solutions for refugees by implementing the Global Compact on Refugees. This framework seeks to foster a more predictable and equitable sharing of responsibilities, underlining the necessity of international cooperation for resolving refugee situations effectively. Currently, Nigeria is home to 87,000 refugees and asylum seekers, with the majority coming from Cameroon.

As Laban began rebuilding his life in Nigeria, he, along with other refugees, decided to establish a Community-Based Organization (CBO) called the Great Step Initiative. As the coordinator of the CBO, he was sponsored to attend high-profile seminars and programs, including the Africa Union's Humanitarian Summit in Equatorial Guinea, the UNHCR Advisory Board Meeting in Geneva, and the African refugee-led organization programme in South Africa. Through these platforms, Laban served as a powerful voice for refugees, ensuring their experiences and needs were central to international dialogues and policy-making efforts.

Laban also attended the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) in Geneva in December 2023. It provided him the opportunity to interact with many

refugees from different countries and actively contributed to shaping the outcomes of the global discussions. "My perception of being a refugee has changed profoundly. I believe that refugees can solve complex challenges that affect them and contribute positively to the host economy", he says.

The Forum is the world's largest international gathering on refugees, designed to support the practical implementation of the objectives set out in the Global Compact on Refugees. These objectives include alleviating pressures on host nations, boosting refugee self-reliance, expanding options for resettlement in third countries, and enhancing conditions in countries of origin. Held every four years, the Forum convenes a diverse group of participants, including states, refugees, host communities, development bodies, the private sector, civil society, faith-based organizations, and other key stakeholders committed to the welfare of refugees.

As a member of the UNHCR's advisory board for forcibly displaced and stateless people and coordinator of the CBO, Laban's commitment to becoming a proponent of refugee solutions is resolute. He has led awareness sessions for refugee leaders, identifying and showcasing the diverse skills and strengths of various refugees and communities to underscore the significant benefits of collaboration, resilience, and determination.

"My primary goal is to empower refugees by providing them with solutions that enhance their self-reliance, opening the door for limitless opportunities. Today, I can confidently say there is hope despite being a refugee", Laban concluded.

With support from UNHCR and several international donors, the CBO has trained over 80 refugees and hosts on various entrepreneurship and vocational skills such as soap-making, shoe/bag-making, hair-dressing, and digital marketing.



## Photo News



### Photo news captions,

1. UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Nigeria, Mohamed Malick Fall (8th from the right), leads the UN Country Team (UNCT) to engage with Minister of Environment, Balarabe Abbas Lawal (9th from the right) and his team at the Federal Ministry of Environment, Abuja.
2. UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Mohamed Malick Fall (Sitting 3rd from the left) joins the N.E. Ambassadors Group to meet Borno State Governor, H.E. Prof Babagana Zulum (Sitting 4th from the left) and the Theatre Commander, Major General Waidi Shaibu (Sitting 1st from the left), to explore how to achieve safe, sustainable solutions to displacement in North-East Nigeria. Others include Resident Representative of UNDP in Nigeria, Ms Elsie Attafuah (2nd from the left) and the Head of the European Union Delegation to Nigeria, Ambassador Samuela Isopi (Sitting 2nd from the right)
3. Honourable Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, HM Wale Edun, welcomes UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Mohamed Malick Fall to his office.



**Editor:** Oluseyi Soremekun (UNIC), **Layout Design:** Michael Achimugu (UNIC)

**Editorial Team:** UNCG members— Ronald Kayanja (Chairman) - UNIC; Kulchumi Isa Hammanyero (WHO); Rajat Madhok & Anike Alli-Hakeem (UNICEF); Stella Onah (UNAIDS); Christabel Chanda-Ginsberg & Rejoice Emmanuel (UNDP); Anthony Abu (UN Women); Adewole Ajao (UNFPA); Pius Udo (ILO); Edward Ogolla & Gabriel Adeyemo (UNHCR); Francois-Xavier Ada & Elijah Elaigwu (IOM); David Tsokar & Oluoma Mezie-Osuocho (FAO); Yachat Nuhu (UNESCO); Ann Weru & Chima Onwe (UNOCHA); Chi Lael & Kelechi Onyemaobi (WFP); Katrien Nollen (UNMAS); Vera Onyeaka-Onyilo (IFAD); Roland Abah (WMO); Oluwatobilola Moody (WIPO).

**Advisory:** United Nations Country Team (UNCT)

All correspondence should be directed to **The Editor, UN Nigeria Newsletter. United Nations Communication Group (UNCG) c/o United Nations Information Centre (UNIC)**, Abuja. E-mail: [unic-lagos@un.org](mailto:unic-lagos@un.org)