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# Newsletter



## UN launches Timbuktoo fintech hub

With so many young people embracing tech and innovation, we see a ray of hope for a brighter, better future - a future of innovative solutions for the present and future generations in Africa. For the #timbuktoo cohorts, You're our hope. You're also our pride." Said the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Nigeria, Mohamed Malick Fall, on Tuesday 9 July 2024 in Lagos, at the launch of the first ever timbuktoo FinTech in Africa.

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He noted that the #timbuktoo FinTech was a timely initiative so critical to accelerating the #SDGs in Nigeria and Africa.

Fall emphasised further that "Technology and innovation will be critical for Africa to leapfrog and transform our societies. Fintech can play a vital role in expanding financial inclusion – which will help us reduce inequalities; create jobs; and reduce inequalities."

The Guardian of the timbuktoo Africa Innovation Foundation & Immediate past Vice President of Nigeria, Prof Yemi Osinbajo, highlighted the potential of youth innovators to bring prosperity and power to the Africa of our dreams, citing successful Nigerian startups like Flutterwave, Interswitch, OPay, and Andela, founded by innovators under 30. "Youth innovators have the power to bring prosperity and power to the Africa of our dreams. Here in Nigeria, the founders of Flutterwave, Interswitch, OPay, and Andela were under 30 when they developed these unicorns," he added.

the potential of young innovators to drive solutions to complex challenges facing the continent.

Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu, represented by his Special Adviser on Innovation and Digital Technology, Olatubosun Alake, acknowledged that the hub's focus on financial technology will accelerate problem-solving, promote inclusive growth, and support sustainable development.

"Africa is the place where ideas come from to unite the world. Our innovators are finding solutions to the most pressing global problems. timbuktoo is about changing the way development works and investing in young talents. I invite you all to join and begin to see Africa from the lens of opportunity," mentioned Ms Ahunna Eziakonwa, UN Assistant Secretary-General and UNDP Regional Director for Africa, during the launch event.



UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Mohamed Malick Fall speaking at the lunch

## RC ends 3 days visit to Enugu, commends efforts in education, health and access to water



Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Mohamed Malick Fall at a health facility in Enugu.

In extending the frontiers of stakeholders' engagement to the sub-national level, the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Nigeria, Mohamed Malick Fall, on Friday 13 July 2024, ended a 3-day working visit to Enugu state.

He was received by H.E. Governor Peter Ndubuisi Mbah who acknowledged that the UN was established for public good, and added that the vision of his administration aligned with the UN mandates and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Reflecting on what he saw at the various project sites he visited, the Resident Coordinator said, "My visit to Owo Smart School, Enugu State was an eye opener and a confirmation that with the right leadership, nothing is impossible. I saw firsthand how technology was deployed to ensure quality education, thus placing students on the path to a brighter future."

At a Type-3 hospital in Agbogugu community, Fall noted the use innovation in health and how commitment to expanding primary health centres could improve access to health services, leaving no one behind.

Engaging with women and youth groups, the Resident Coordinator said he was impressed by the young people taking action to accelerate the #SDGs in Enugu state, and acknowledged the women's clamour for increased female representation in politics.

He urged all Nigerian women to remain optimistic about having more women in political leadership.

"UN Nigeria is committed to deploying all its assets for the acceleration of #SDGs at both state and federal levels. We will continue to support the government of Nigeria in strengthening health system across the country." He added.

Enugu State Government World Health Organization Nigeria UNICEF Nigeria



Mohamed Malick Fall experiences Virtual Reality at Owo Smart School in Enugu.



Mohamed Malick Fall with H.E. Governor Peter Ndubuisi Mbah

# UN inaugurates Project Advisory Committee (PAC) to govern its child labour projects



A group photograph of the ILO Country Director and stakeholders at the inauguration of the Project Advisory Committee (PAC)

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has convened stakeholders in Nigeria to inaugurate the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) for three projects targeting the elimination of child labour. These projects are Action Against Child Labour in Agriculture in West Africa (ACLAWA); Accelerating Action for the Elimination of Child Labour in Supply Chains in Africa (ACCEL Africa Phase II); and the Global Accelerator Lab (GALAB).

The PAC will function as the governing body for these projects, ensuring their activities and impacts align with national and regional priorities. These initiatives, supported by the US Department of Labour and the Government of the Netherlands, are geared towards addressing the pervasive issue of child labour in Nigeria and aligning efforts with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly target 8.7, which seeks to eradicate forced labor, modern slavery, human trafficking, and end child labour in all its forms by 2025.

"We believe that the ambitious goals of the three ILO projects on child labour can be achieved with the collaboration and trust of the social partners making up the governance structure through the singular PAC for these projects." Said Ms. Vanessa Phala, Director, ILO Country Office for Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Liaise Office of ECOWAS.

Who are they?

The PAC consists of stakeholders including tripartite representatives from government ministries, departments, and agencies, Workers, and Employers representatives, listed below. The ILO will serve as the committee's secretariat. The Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food

Security will chair the PAC, while the National Social Safety-Net Coordinating Office is the co-chair.

The PAC includes the representatives of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment (FMLE); Nigeria Employers' Consultative Association (NECA); Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC); Trade Union Congress (TUC); Social Affairs Division, ECOWAS; Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (FMAFS); Ministry of Solid Minerals Development (MSMD); Federal Ministry of Women Affairs (FMWA); National Social Safety-Net Coordinating Office (NASSCO); National Cash Transfer Office (NCTO); National Health Insurance Authority (NHIA); National Bureau of Statistics (NBS); and International Labour Organization (ILO). What will they do?

The PAC will provide advisory support and make strategic decisions to ensure that interventions align with the project objectives and development priorities of the Government of Nigeria and the ILO. Its primary objectives are to provide oversight responsibilities for project implementation at all levels – National and Sub-national; ensure stakeholder representation; and periodically review, based on reports and in conjunction with the ILO, progress towards successful implementation of the project(s) and offer advice where required to ensure timely attainment of outcomes.

Others include to ensure alignment and use of synergies between project cross-cutting activities and related projects by development partners and the government of Nigeria's development priorities; and regularly review and evaluate potential risks to the project(s) and offer advice on preventive measures.

## Global Accelerator Lab (GALAB) boosts inclusion of individuals and households in Ondo State



A group photograph of participants

In a concerted effort to enhance social protection coverage in Ondo State, the International Labour Organization's Global Accelerator Lab (GALAB) supported the development of a strategy to bolster the registration of individuals and households into the state's social register and health insurance schemes. This initiative specifically targeted those at risk of child labour and forced labour.

"This collaboration with Ondo State is a significant step towards achieving SDG 8.7 on eradicating forced labour, modern slavery, and human trafficking and securing decent work for all men and women," said Dr. Vanessa Phala, Director, ILO Country Office for Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Liberia and liaison office for ECOWAS, who was represented by Emmanuel Danjuma, National Programme Coordinator for the GALAB Project.

The two-day meeting, held from 17 to 18 July in Akure, brought together members of the state's technical working group on social protection. This group included representatives from various ministries, departments, and agencies. The meeting aimed to develop comprehensive strategies to update the social register and increase enrolment in the health insurance scheme.

Key objectives of the meeting included formulating a strategy to include individuals and households at risk of child and forced labour in the state social register, and enhancing collaboration among the technical working group members. The expected outcomes included a well-defined strategy for the inclusion of vulnerable populations and increased registration for health insurance.

The meeting was facilitated by the State Operations Coordination Unit with support from the Ministry of Economic Planning and Budget. Discussions were participatory, with stakeholders and technical working group members contributing to the development of the strategies. The GALAB National Project Coordinator provided guidance on collaboration with the state for the strategy's implementation.

"The discussions were productive, and we identified concrete steps to improve the social protection system in Ondo State," said participant - Ms. Abegunde Omolade, a representative from Ondo State Primary Health Care Development Agency. "This will make a real difference in the lives of vulnerable families."

Following the strategy meeting, a five-day community engagement session took place from 19 to 24 July. This engagement targeted traditional leaders, cocoa farmers' association leaders, and women and youth leaders across twenty project communities. The sessions aimed to mobilise these communities and sensitize them on the criteria for inclusion in the social register and access to health insurance and other social protection programmes.

The meeting concluded with a review of the community engagement on 25 July, focusing on the progress made and the next steps. This initiative underscores GALAB's commitment to strengthening social protection frameworks and ensuring vulnerable populations in Ondo State receive the support they need.

The collaboration involved key implementing partners such as the State Operations Coordination Unit (SOCU), State Contributory Health

Commission (ODCHC), Trade Union Congress (TUC), and the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment, demonstrating a robust multi-stakeholder approach to addressing social protection challenges in the State.

This initiative by the ILO's GALAB project in Ondo State is a positive example of multi-stakeholder collaboration in strengthening social protection systems to address child labour and forced labour. By ensuring vulnerable households have access to social safety nets, the project is contributing to a future of decent work for all.

#### About GALAB Project

The Strategy Development to Boost Social Protection Registration in Ondo State is delivered as part of the GALAB project, funded by the United States Department of Labor (USDOL) and implemented by the ILO as part of its 8.7 Accelerator Lab network. GALAB tackles child labour (SDG Target 8.7) in six countries. It works with communities to address root causes through policy changes, skills training, and social protection. By collaborating with the Alliance 8.7, GALAB empowers communities to break the cycle of child labour and build a future where all children can thrive.



## UN, Partners announce winners of the 2nd edition of short film contest on combatting trafficking in persons



The three winners of the short film contest pose with their awards cheques. Photo: IOM/Oluwafemi Iselowo 2024

The International Organization for Migration (IOM), in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) are proud to announce the winners the Second Edition of the Annual Short Film Contest on Combatting Trafficking in Persons in Nigeria.

The second edition of the contest received over 30 entries from talented filmmakers across Nigeria. The entries were evaluated by a panel of judges comprising experts from the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, civil society organizations and the Nigerian film industry. The winners were announced on July 29, 2024, at a ceremony attended by Government officials, CSO representatives, the diplomatic corps and partners in the fight against trafficking in persons.

- The first prize of \$2,000 was awarded to Michael Atama for his film "Misled", which depicts the harrowing journey of young Nigerian girls trafficked to Ghana.
- The second prize of \$1,000 was awarded to Grace Olubiyo for her film "Ireti" (The Promise), which narrates the ordeal of a family coming to terms with the trafficking of a child.

- The third prize of a laptop was awarded to Erica Bale for her film "Dark Room", a gripping film that centers on an 18-year-old girl, Chima, who becomes entangled in the dangerous world of human trafficking.

The winning films have been recognized for their powerful messages, creative storytelling, and technical excellence. The filmmakers have demonstrated remarkable talent and skill in raising awareness and inspiring action against the scourge of human trafficking

"I would like to congratulate all the participants for their efforts and dedication to combat human trafficking through their art", said Laurent De Boeck, IOM Nigeria Chief of Mission, during the awards ceremony. "Our actions have the power to change the world around us and inspire others in our lives to get up and take action too", he added. The 2024 Edition of the Short Film Contest on Combating Trafficking in Persons in Nigeria was supported by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Embassy of France in Nigeria.

# UN, EU, Partners renew commitment to support peace and reconciliation in Katsina State



A family picture of the participants at the Steering Committee meeting. Photo: IOM 2024

The International Organization for Migration (IOM), the European Union (EU), as well as partners including Mercy Corps and the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) have reaffirmed their commitment to support peace and reconciliation in Katsina state, in Northwestern Nigeria, where insecurity linked with banditry and adverse effects of climate change have resulted in displacement.

This was made clear during a recently concluded Extended Steering Committee meeting held on 27 June 2024 in Katsina, which brought together representatives from the Federal and State Governments, as well as civil society, traditional and religious leaders, women and youth groups from 4 Local Government Areas.

“Peace and reconciliation are essential for the development of Katsina State, and we are grateful to all our partners supporting us in this endeavor”, said Professor Ahmed Bakori Mohammed, the Honorable Commissioner for Katsina State Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development during the meeting.

Since January 2023, IOM, Mercy Corps and the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) are jointly implementing a programme to support community mediation and reconciliation in Katsina State. The programme, which is supported by the European Union Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (EU FPI) aims to reduce community violence, promote locally driven peace initiatives, and mitigate conflicts over natural resources in Katsina State of Northwest Nigeria.

The project has reached more than 30,000 direct beneficiaries and over 300,000 people indirect beneficiaries including local community members and leaders, through various activities, such as dialogue and mediation, capacity building, community infrastructure rehabilitation, and income-generating support.

During the meeting, the participants praised the project’s innovative approaches, including the integration of community-based early warning systems to limit the escalation of tensions, as well as the mainstreaming of mental health and psychosocial interventions to help survivors of kidnappings overcome their traumatic experiences.

The ongoing implementation of quick impact projects will promote the social cohesion and coexistence between communities.

The programme has notably vulgarized the concept of interest-based negotiation among rural communities to foster mutually acceptable outcomes when tensions arise in communities.

“Through accurate data and innovative peacebuilding approaches, local actors are now able to act on time to prevent the escalation of conflicts and support locally driven conflict resolution methods”, said Laurent de Boeck, IOM Nigeria’s Chief of Mission.

## Malawian officials visit Nigeria to learn from immigration governance practices



The visiting delegation poses in front of the IOM Nigeria Main Office in Abuja. Photo: IOM

A delegation from the Malawian Department of Immigration and Citizenship Services, (DoICS), has conducted a five-day comprehensive study visit to the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) as part of ongoing efforts to enhance border governance and management through knowledge sharing on best practices between the two countries.

Led by the Acting Director General of Malawi Immigration and Citizenship Services, Commissioner Fletcher Nyirenda, the delegation gained insight into Nigeria's advanced border management system, including the implementation of the MIDAS system, data collection protocols, and the overarching architecture of MIDAS to help guide Malawi's MIDAS expansion.

In Nigeria, the delegation was received by NIS Comptroller Odide Kalu in Lagos and IOM Chief of Mission, Laurent De Boeck, in Abuja. The delegation visited Seme Border Post, the MIDAS Training Centre, the Personnel Training and Resource Centre, and the Command Control Centre.

"The visit was strategic in understanding the operational framework of the MIDAS system and exploring ways to strengthen cooperation between our two countries", said Commissioner Fletcher Nyirenda. The study visit is part of IOM's global vision to strengthen South-South cooperation on migration governance by fostering peer-to-peer exchanges and study visits between countries.

Stressing the importance of such a visit to regional cooperation, IOM Chief of Mission to the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Laurent De Boeck, expressed IOM's commitment to harnessing the promise of migration through capacity-building among member states for improved migration management.

The visit also paved the way for future collaboration in the areas of immigration and border management, including strengthening the bilateral relations between Nigeria and Malawi.

The study visit was facilitated by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) with the support of the World Bank.

# Embracing Ethical Artificial Intelligence in Nigeria through UNESCO Readiness Assessment Methodology



Cross-section of participants with the Honourable Minister of Communications, Innovation and Digital Economy, Dr. 'Bosun Tijani after the launching of RAM

UNESCO-Nigeria, with the support of European Commission's Directorate General for International Partnerships (INTPA) successfully launched the UNESCO's Readiness Assessment Methodology (RAM) in Nigeria on July 22, 2024. The event is part of UNESCO efforts of "Supporting Member States in Implementing UNESCO's Recommendation on the Ethics of AI through Innovative Tools initiative".

The Head of UNESCO Abuja office and UNESCO Representative to Nigeria, Mr. Abdourahamane Diallo, in his inspiring opening speech, emphasized that the gathering is a testament to the transformative capacity of AI to drive innovation and sustainable development, when harnessed within ethical structure. He explained that the exercise is a macro-level attempt to determine Nigeria's current standing on ensuring ethical AI development and use, while noting UNESCO's commitment to supporting Nigeria through innovative initiatives and active collaboration.

The event also encrypts substantial landmark in Nigeria's AI trajectory and was well received by all stakeholders as contained in the commendation by the Honourable Minister of Communication, Innovation and Digital Economy, Dr. Bosun Tijani. The Minister described the exercise as timely, considering that the country had just concluded its National AI Strategy of which the report aligns substantially with UNESCO's vision of ethical AI development. He equally appreciates UNESCO for identifying Nigeria at this point, as one of the member states to be supported for the project.

Other major highlights of the day include:

- A video message by the Assistant Director General of Social and Human Sciences, UNESCO, Ms. Gabriela Ramos reinforced the value of the event from both global, regional and national perspectives, providing insights that enriched deliberation among participants by highlighting the multiple benefit of Ethical AI. The message further identified the significance of the methodology and encouraged constructive deliberation.
- Speech by the Secretary General of the National Commission for UNESCO's, Dr. Olagunju Idowu on implementation of the RAM, which was characterized by confidence in the possibilities of positive outcomes emerging from the exercise in Nigeria.
- Presentation of a four-step road map project by the Lead Consultant, Dr. Adekemi Omotubora, for deploying the RAM in Nigeria, which had "presentation of country report" as it's last item, expected to hold by December 2024.
- Stakeholders participation, which marked active deliberation, contributions and engagement with government officials, academia and the private sector.
- Inauguration of the Steering Committee, which was made up of focal points nominated by different ministries that will help in playing oversight function on the exercise, and inauguration of the Technical Working Group (TWG), constituted by AI experts, computer scientists,



Cross-section of participants during the launching RAM

scholars and Ethicist from the public sector, private sector, academia and civils society organizations. The inauguration was also marked by a compelling charge by the Honourable Minister, Dr. Bosun Tijani. He encouraged the groups to recognize the historical making assignment before them and the need for diligence to guide their commitments.

- Special thanks by the Head of Social and Human Sciences unit, UNESCO Abuja Office, Ms. Nneka Okafor to all participants for honoring the invitation, and to other UN sister agencies, especially UNIC for actively participating in the event.

- Separate interactive sessions by the Steering Committee and the TWG with the Lead Consultant and the Director of the National Centre for Artificial Intelligence – Nigeria (NCAIR), and Head of Office.



Dr. 'Bosun Tijani, Honourable Minister of Communications, Innovation and Digital Economy with members of the Steering Committee

# World Youth Skills Day celebration and national launch of BEAR III project



The Executive Governor of Kano State, His Excellency Abba Kabir Yusuf at the lunch

In a grand event that underscored the importance of youth skills in fostering peace and development, the UNESCO Abuja Office, in collaboration with the State Government of Kano and the Aliko Dangote Ultra-Modern Skills Acquisition Center, organized the national launch of the Better Education for Africa's Rise (BEAR) III Project on the occasion of the World Youth Skills Day. The event flagged off a three-day National Skills Exhibition with over 50 innovators who showcased their products. The event, held in Kano State, brought over 300 participants together including high-profile dignitaries, such as the Executive Governor of Kano State, the Minister of State for Youth Development, the Chief of Staff to the Kano State Governor, state commissioners, and other key stakeholders.

The opening session commenced with a welcome address by Hon. Alkasim Hussaini Wudil, Center Coordinator of the Dangote Ultra-Modern Skills Acquisition Center, Kano State, who welcomed the dignitaries and attendees to the center.

Mr. Abdourahamane Diallo, Head of the UNESCO Abuja Office and UNESCO Representative in Nigeria, appreciated the collaboration between UNESCO and the Government of Kano State. Mr. Diallo emphasized the important role of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in achieving Agenda 2030. He highlighted TVET as the 'master key' for economic development, advocating for its role in promoting lifelong learning, alleviating poverty, fostering peace, and supporting the transition to green economies and environmental sustainability. He further elaborated on how TVET equips youth and adults with essential skills for accessing the world of work, including self-employment, increased productivity, and higher wage levels. Additionally,

TVET provides valuable skills development opportunities for out-of-school youth and individuals not in education, employment, or training.

Mr. Manish Joshi, BEAR III Regional Coordinator, provided an insightful overview of the BEAR III project, focusing on its three main pillars: Quality, Relevance, and Attractiveness. Hon. Ayodele Olawande Wisdom, Minister of State for Youth Development, commended the Aliko Dangote Ultra-Modern Skills Acquisition Center for its remarkable work and emphasized the critical importance of skills for every youth in Nigeria.

The session concluded with remarks from the Executive Governor of Kano State, His Excellency Abba Kabir Yusuf, who highlighted the state's efforts in youth skills development and empowerment programs. He commended UNESCO for the BEAR III project and affirmed Kano State's support for its successful implementation. The official launch of the BEAR III Project marked the end of the opening session. Promoting Peace and Development through Youth Skills

In line with the theme of the World Youth Skills Day, one of the objectives of the collaboration between UNESCO and the Aliko Dangote Ultra-Modern Skills Acquisition Center was to highlight the critical role young people play in peacebuilding and conflict resolution in Nigeria. To this end, the event provided a platform to:

- Facilitate a roundtable discussion with key stakeholders on improving youth skills to enhance employability, promote peace, and foster national development.

To facilitate a roundtable discussion with key stakeholders on improving youth skills to enhance employability, promote peace, and foster national development; and engage with institutions and stakeholders crucial for the successful implementation of the BEAR III project. Showcasing Youth Innovation

Following the opening session, dignitaries and attendees toured the national skills exhibition pavilion. The exhibition featured over 50 youths showcasing their innovative products, including: Farm products, Seed cleaning machines and other agricultural equipment, Re-

mote starters for motorbikes; Modern bicycle technologies, Fashion designs, including shoes and bags, Hair fertilizers and Artworks. The exhibition highlighted the entrepreneurial spirit and creativity of Nigerian youth, demonstrating their practical skills and potential for contributing to sustainable development and peacebuilding.



# Empowering Change: Paving the way for disability inclusion in Nigeria



A facilitator at the workshop

The United Nations Disability Inclusion Technical Working Group (UNDITWG), led by UNESCO, successfully organized a National Multi-Stakeholder Capacity-Building Induction Training Workshop on Disability Inclusion from July 2nd to 5th, 2024. This was in alignment with the broader UN initiatives, including the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, which seeks to mainstream disability inclusion across all aspects of the UN's work. It also aligns with the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD) initiative, which supports the development of inclusive societies and the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) globally. This impactful workshop, held at the United Nations (UN) Building in Abuja, was supported by the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD) and featured Professor Chukwuedozie K. Ajaero as the resource person.

The training brought together about 100 participants which includes Disability Inclusion Desk Officers from various government ministries and institutes, representatives from Organizations of Persons with Disabilities across Nigeria's geo-political zones, institutions, corporate organizations, businesses, religious institutions, media and development partners.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Mohammed Fall, UN Resident / Humanitarian Coordinator, welcomed participants to the workshop, emphasizing the importance of capacity-building on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), Nigeria's Discrimination

Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, and the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy. He stressed the need to integrate disability inclusion into programs and activities, quoting UN Secretary-General António Guterres, who said, "Inclusion is the cornerstone of a sustainable future. Without it, we are merely building on sand."

Mr. Fall highlighted that an estimated 1.3 billion people globally experience significant disabilities, with 7% of Nigerians aged 5 and above facing some level of difficulty in at least one functional domain.

In his speech, Mr. Abdourahamane Diallo, Head of UNESCO Abuja Office and UNESCO Representative to Nigeria, and the Chair for UNCT Disability Inclusion, underscored the need for persons with disabilities to actively contribute to Nigeria's socio-economic development. He stated, "We have made significant strides, but there is still much work to be done. This training is a critical step in our ongoing efforts to build capacity, strengthen partnerships, and create an enabling environment for disability-inclusive development."

The UNFPA Deputy Representative Mr. Koesan Kuawu (OIC) who serves as the co-chair of UNCT Disability Inclusion emphasized the importance of bridging the skills and competency gap between persons with disabilities and the governments to ensure the effective implementation of disability inclusion policies. This capacity building training is an opportunity to have a robust means of ensuring no one is left behind and reaching the fatherest behind. It will present the prospect to deep dive into the CRPD, its purpose, principles and general obligations. The UN deliberate about reaching the fatherest behind and

leaving no one behind. If you recall, in 2022/23 the UN made a re-commit to really walking the talk. The time to have disaggregated data is now, this would ensure more responsive programming and design and mainstreaming of inclusion into our respective workplans.

Mr. James Lalu, Executive Secretary of the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities, commended the UN's work and highlighted the need for continued advocacy. He emphasized the importance of extending these efforts to rural communities and ensuring that accessibility for persons with disabilities is improved. He called for sustained engagement and support to bridge gaps in service delivery and accessibility, ensuring that all communities benefit from disability inclusion initiatives.

The event also acknowledged the valuable intervention by Dr. Ishaku Adamu, President of the Nigeria Association of the Blind and Secretary-General of the Joint Association of Persons with Disabilities. Dr. Adamu called for the domestication of the Disability Act across all states and advocated for enhanced education, employment, and accessibility for persons with disabilities. He emphasized the importance of including persons with disabilities in UN activities, particularly in humanitarian efforts. The UN reaffirmed its commitment to promoting disability inclusion and called for greater efforts to eliminate discrimination.

The workshop enhanced participants' knowledge on CRPD-SDG implementation, equality and non-discrimination, support assessment and referral services, data for inclusion, cross-sector coordination, accountability, and CRPD-compliant budgeting and financial management.

On the final day, participants expressed their gratitude to UNDITWG for the engaging training, which deepened their understanding of disability issues. They highlighted the need for increased public awareness, especially among religious leaders, traditional rulers, families, and community unions, to foster an inclusive society.

This workshop and the ongoing efforts are aligned with several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 4: Quality Education, SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth, SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities, SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities, SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, and SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals, highlighting the collective commitment to creating an inclusive, equitable, and sustainable future for all, particularly for persons with disabilities.



Presentation by a group member after a class activity

# UN Nigeria launches humanitarian assistance to Benue State



A stack of dignity kits donated to beneficiaries

UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), has officially flagged off its humanitarian action efforts in Benue State with the donation of 2000 dignity kits and Inter-Agency Reproductive Health (IARH) kits to the Benue state government.

The items were received by the Deputy Governor of the state; H.E. Bar. Dr. Sam Ode. The donation aims to provide life-saving support for the wellbeing and dignity of women and girls in the state, particularly the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). In addition to the donation of essential kits, UNFPA through its implementing partners; Nigeria Red Cross Society (NRCS) and Royal Heritage Health Foundation (RHHF) is supporting the Benue State government with capacity building initiatives targeting healthcare workers, social workers, and community volunteers.

A total of 50 healthcare workers, 40 social workers, and 25 community volunteers are receiving specialized training to enhance their skills in gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and response, as well as provision of quality sexual and reproductive healthcare services, including safe delivery, clinical management of rape, Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care, family planning and careline referral services.

The capacity building program is designed to empower local frontline workers and volunteers to better address the unique needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs) who are mostly women and girls and are presently in IDP camps and host communities. By strengthening the knowledge and skills of healthcare providers, social workers, and community volunteers, UNFPA Nigeria aims to improve access to qual-

ity services related to GBV prevention, response, and sexual and reproductive health care.

Speaking at the flag-off ceremony, Chris Sabum Macauley, Humanitarian Coordinator of UNFPA Nigeria, expressed the organization's commitment to supporting the most vulnerable populations in Benue State. "UNFPA is dedicated to promoting the health, rights, and dignity of women and girls, especially in humanitarian settings. Through our partnership with the Benue State government and local stakeholders, we aim to build a more resilient and responsive system that prioritizes the needs of women and girls affected by crisis," Chris Sabum stated. Deputy Governor of the state; H.E. Bar. Dr. Sam Ode, in his speech, appreciated the UNFPA team for their commitment to supporting displaced communities and for the donation of the lifesaving commodities. The Deputy Governor assured UNFPA that the items donated will be used effectively to support vulnerable women and girls in Benue state.

The launch of UNFPA's humanitarian support in Benue marks a significant step towards addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by women and girls in the state. By providing essential kits and building the capacity of local healthcare workers, social workers, and community volunteers, UNFPA is working to ensure that every woman and girl in Benue has access to quality sexual and reproductive healthcare which contributes to the transformative goal of eliminating maternal deaths, removing barriers to unmet need for family planning and eliminating gender-based violence and harmful practices in Benue State.

## UN Convenes National Stakeholders' roundtable to discuss new International Treaties addressing IPs



Wend Wendland

In May 2024, and after over 20 years of negotiations, WIPO member states adopted the first WIPO Treaty addressing the interface between intellectual property, genetic resources and traditional knowledge. This Treaty is also the first WIPO Treaty to include provisions specifically for Indigenous Peoples as well as local communities.

Defined as genetic material of actual or potential value, genetic resources are a huge opportunity for researchers and biotechnology stakeholders, amongst others. They are contained in, for example, medicinal plants, agricultural crops, and animal breeds. While genetic resources themselves cannot be directly protected as intellectual property, inventions developed using them can be protected, most often through a patent.

Some genetic resources are also associated with traditional knowledge through their use and conservation by Indigenous Peoples as well as local communities, often over generations. This knowledge is sometimes used in scientific research and, as such, may contribute to the development of a protected invention.

The Treaty supports the transparency in the intellectual property system by requiring applicants for patent protection over inventions based on genetic resources and/or associated traditional knowledge to disclose the origin or source of genetic resources or Indigenous Peoples or local community that provided the traditional knowledge.

On August 14, 2024, the WIPO Nigeria Office held a Roundtable discussion with knowledge experts, representatives of the IP Offices and other key stakeholders to further explore the provisions of the Treaty which Nigeria has signed on to, while yet considering its implications for local stakeholders and its implementation and domestication opportunities in Nigeria.

Mr. Wend Wendland, Director of the Traditional Knowledge Division at WIPO, provided attendees with a historical overview of the treaty. Wendland also highlighted the treaty's future steps, including its domestication into national law, the engagement of indigenous peoples

and local communities, and the continuation of the Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge, and Folklore (IGC) negotiations.



Adding to the discourse, **Professor Chidi Oguamanam**, one of the expert negotiators for Nigeria to the Treaty, delved into the Treaty's key components and the challenges it addresses. Oguamanam stressed the necessity for collaboration among diverse stakeholders to fully leverage the Treaty's benefits, particularly in areas intersecting with technology and governance.

With a rich array of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge practices amongst communities in Nigeria, the stakeholder's roundtable drew a wide range of participation with over 134 attendees. These included representatives from the Patents and Designs Registry, the Trademarks Registry, the Nigerian Copyright Commission, the National Plants Variety Protection Office, the Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, the National Biotechnology Development Agency, the National Office for Trade Negotiations, the Nigeria Natural Medicine Development Agency, the National Office for Technology Acquisition and Promotion, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, the Ministry of Justice as well as members of the legal and academic communities.

The Treaty will enter into force after 15 parties have submitted their instruments of ratification.

## Defying all odds: A story of UNHAS Helicopter Engineer, Phoebe Egu



Phoebe Egu, an aircraft maintenance engineer, checks UNHAS helicopters in Maiduguri, Nigeria, before they fly.

From a young age, Miss Phoebe Chizobam Egu had always been fascinated by aeroplanes and the idea of flight. Growing up in Kaduna State (northwest Nigeria) with her mother and her younger sister – and being exposed to aeroplanes – strengthened Phoebe’s ambition of becoming a pilot. However, due to financial constraints, she couldn’t pursue that dream.

After her high school education, Phoebe went on to the Kaduna Polytechnic to study engineering. However, after her national diploma in 2010, she heard from a friend about the Airforce Institute of Technology, Kaduna, which was offering a higher national diploma in aircraft engineering. And that was how she took the opportunity to study aircraft engineering.

Phoebe Egu is an ambitious, efficient and hardworking young lady, committed to her job at the maintenance department of Global Helicopter Service (GHS) which works for the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) in Maiduguri, Borno State. The maintenance department ensure the safe transportation of UNHAS users and cargo to the deep field.

In addition to her qualification and experience as an Aircraft Maintenance Engineer (AME-E), Egu also obtained a licence from the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA). Egu is very happy facing the challenges of her work and is always looking forward to making a positive impact in the humanitarian space through her work.

“When I come to work in the morning, I give my best in checking that the helicopters are safe to fly,” says Egu.

“My greatest desire is to be a voice in the aviation space for young girls so they can look up to me, not just in Nigeria alone but globally. As I remain committed to ensuring safer aircraft that support humanitarians to the deep field, I look forward to mentoring young girls that desire a career in this space”.



## UN Women holds inaugural open day event, showcasing impact and strengthening partnerships



Director of ILO Nigeria Country Office, Vanessa Phala (4th from the right) along side

UN Women organized its first Open Day event, highlighting her work and advocating for greater women's representation and empowerment. The initiative, held on July 19, 2024, in the South-South region of Nigeria, brought together government officials, civil society organizations, the private sector, and media representatives to discuss progress and challenges in advancing gender equality.

The event provided a unique platform for UN Women partners and beneficiaries to share success stories and positive impacts of gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE). Participants had the opportunity to explore exhibitions showcasing UN Women's publications and products, offering insights into various initiatives. The Open Day also served as a forum to identify areas requiring further action and to strengthen partnerships for expanded reach and impact.

Beatrice Eyong, UN Women Representative to Nigeria and ECOWAS, emphasized the organization's three-fold mandate in Nigeria: supporting the government in developing gender-responsive legal frameworks, coordinating UN and development partners' gender mechanisms, and implementing interventions to improve the lives of women and girls. The event highlighted several success stories, including the abolition of money-wife customs in Obanliku community, income-generating skills training, and support for survivors of gender-based violence.

The Open Day event reaffirmed UN Women's commitment to collaborating with the Nigerian government and relevant stakeholders to advance gender equality and women's empowerment. By fostering dialogue and showcasing tangible results, the initiative aimed to mo-

bilize political commitments and support from key decision-makers, ultimately working towards a more inclusive and equitable society for women and girls in Nigeria.



UN Women Country Representative, Beatrice Eyong. Photo: UN Women

## Fati leads the change: Transforming conflict into peace and empowerment in Damaturu



Fati Ibrahim in her palace together with some of her council members

**F**ati, a 60-year-old retiree from Damaturu, Yobe State, Nigeria, is among the countless women who witnessed the devastating effects of conflict on her community, particularly on women and girls. Prior to UN Women's intervention, the violent conflict in Nigeria's North East which sipped into Damaturu not only displaced families but also began to cause internal divisions, with families torn apart by disputes over land, marriage, and other communal issues. As a retiree from the civil service, Fati was deeply moved by the plight of her community members, who were struggling with the harsh realities of displacement and economic hardship due to ongoing conflicts. Despite her willingness to help, Fati was at a loss of how to effectively address the pervasive issues of violence and division in her community. The need for structured guidance and resources was evident if she were to make a meaningful impact.

Fati's opportunity came when she was selected to participate in training on advocacy and sensitization for peacebuilding and conflict resolution, organized by UN Women and PWAN. In 2021, with support from UN Women through Partners West Africa (PWAN) and funded by the Government of Japan, carried out an intervention on peace and conflict resolution community. Inspired and equipped with new skills, Fati turned her home into a training center, where she began sensitizing, educating and empowering women and girls in the Abari community. Her efforts have since had a profound impact. For instance, in January 2024, Fati helped a young woman who was a victim of family abuse by connecting her with the Ministry of Women Affairs in Damaturu. The young woman received training in fashion design and was able to gain independence, breaking free from the cycle of abuse and supporting her two children.

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Additionally, Fati's advocacy has fostered a significant shift in her com-

munity's approach to conflict. Families are now resolving disputes through dialogue and mediation, rather than resorting to violence. This transformation has not only reduced the incidence of conflict but also cultivated a culture of collaboration and mutual respect.

Fati shared this with unwavering conviction - "If this is the only thing I will do with my remaining life on earth, I know I will be fulfilled. My dedication to promoting peace and empowering women has paved the way for a brighter future for my community. I hold meetings every Saturday to keep the awareness going, not just on conflict management but also against gender-based violence,"

Through her leadership and advocacy, Fati continues to be a beacon of hope in Damaturu, inspiring others to join her in building an inclusive and resilient society where peace and justice prevail. Fati grew through the ranks from a member of a Community Safety Platform (CSP) in Yobe State, established by UN Women and PWAN. In the last 2 years, she successfully broke the patriarchal and the cultural barriers that excludes women as members of the traditional council in Yobe State. Her enormous, outstanding, and exceptional performance as a CSP member in advocating, promoting and protecting women and the girl child in her community, has been recognised by the Damaturu Emirate Council of Yobe State who elevated her status in the community by appointing and turbaning her as the first female Bulama (Ward Head) of Abbari community.

Fati's journey from a civil servant to a retiree and now a peacebuilder highlights the transformative power of community-driven initiatives and the lasting impact one individual can have in fostering peace and empowerment.

## Photo News



### Photo news captions,

1. (L-R) UNFPA Nigeria Deputy Representative Mr. Koessan Kuawu, Vice President Senator Shettima, National Population Commission Chairman Mr. Issa Kwarra, Minister of Youth Development Dr. Jamila Bio Ibrahim and UNIC Nigeria Director Mr. Ronald Kayanga.
2. In commemoration of Nelson Mandela International Day at the UN House Abuja, July 18.
3. Internal Displacement Solutions Fund (IDSF) State-Level Workshop has been launched across Borno, Adamawa & Yobe States (BAY States) to support the government institutional capacity in implementing the State Action Plans.

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