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Provide PPEs For Journalists – Kallon urges Media Owners And Employers



UN Resident and Humanitarian-Coordinator Edward Kallon.

In solidarity with journalists on the frontline of COVID-19 response in Nigeria, the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian-Coordinator for Nigeria, Mr Edward Kallon has called on media owners and employers in Nigeria to provide minimum Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for their reporters who daily cover the coronavirus pandemic.

Speaking on the observance of the World Press Freedom Day in Nigeria, held 5 May 2020, via a webinar titled, “Journalism without fear or favour in the period of pandemic”, Mr Kallon said that “Media entrepreneurs must take the issue of welfare and safety of journalists more seriously, at this time of pandemic and at all time.”

The webinar, organised by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Abuja, Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), Channels Television Academy and the UN Information Centre (UNIC) Nigeria, had sixty-eight participants and speakers in attendance, including the Director of UNESCO Abuja Regional Office, Mr Yao Ydo; Chairman, Channels Television, Dr John Momoh; President of NUJ, Mr Chris Isiguzo; President of Press Union of Liberia (PUL), Mr. Charles B Coffey; President, Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ), Mr. Ahmed Sahid Nasralla; and President of Ghana Journalists Association (GJA), Mr. Roland Affail Monney.

The Resident Coordinator observed that journalists across the world, including Nigeria had been reported infected with COVID-19 in the line of duty...continue on page 2.

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**Aliko Dangote Foundation
Contributes N1.5 Billion (USD \$
3.8 million) To Nigeria/ One-UN
COVID-19 Basket Fund**



Laboratory technicians at the Nigeria Center for Disease Control (NCDC) National Reference Lab. Photo: NCDC/Tijesu Ojumu

The Aliko Dangote Foundation (ADF) has joined hands with the United Nations in Nigeria with a total sum of N1.5 Billion (equivalent to US \$3.8 million) contribution to the Nigeria UN COVID-19 Basket Fund.

ADF collaboration with the UN will bolster the Nigerian Government's efforts of strengthening the functional capacity of the healthcare systems and support to those affected by the coronavirus. The contribution from ADF, will go towards the procurement of the much-needed testing and medical supplies and equipment, to aid the healthcare response towards the COVID19 pandemic.

“The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on Nigeria is enormous and affects...continue on page 2.

Provide PPEs for Journalists...Continued from page 1

"If we want journalism without fear or favour, media employers and entrepreneurs must be assuring in their duty of care to their reporters." He said

In his message on World Press Freedom Day delivered by Mr Kallon, the UN secretary-General Antonio Guterres, called on governments to protect media workers, and to strengthen and maintain press freedom, which is essential for a future of peace, justice and human rights for all.

"We particularly recognize those who are playing a life-saving role reporting on public health." The Secretary General continued, "We thank the media for providing facts and analysis; for holding leaders – in every sector – accountable; and for speaking truth to power."

Guterres further called on governments and others, to guarantee that journalists can do their jobs throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. "The press provides the antidote: verified, scientific, fact-based news and analysis." He added.

Dr Momoh, in his keynote address, charged journalists not to fear to do their work and not to work out of fear. "In the face of this pandemic, the media should be daring with its investigation, factual with its reports, courageous in the face of danger, and calculative in risk taking." He said

The Channels TV boss, therefore, called for media training on the preventive techniques of covering a pandemic as deadly as COVID-19.

Delivering the message of UNESCO Director General, Ms Audrey Azoulay, the UNESCO Abuja Regional Director, Mr Yao

Ydo, noted that "At a time when we are mired in worry and uncertainty because of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, free information is essential to helping us face, understand, think about and overcome this crisis."

According to him, "We must consider the vital importance of information in this situation: informing the public means giving everyone the means of combatting the illness by adopting appropriate practices."



UNESCO Abuja Regional Director, Mr Yao Ydo,

Aliko Dangote Foundation Contributes N1.5 Billion (USD \$ 3.8 million)...Continued from page 1



Laboratory technicians at the Nigeria Center for Disease Control (NCDC) National Reference Lab. Photo: NCDC/Tijesu Ojumu

COVID-19 Financing and Investment Platform through which stakeholders, including the private sector, can channel their financial assistance to the multi-sectoral efforts of the Presidential Task Force on COVID-19.

The UN Strategy uses the Basket Fund (pooled fund) arrangement to support the rapid implementation of Nigeria's National COVID-19 Multi-sectoral Pandemic Response Plan in the ten functional areas, through a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) or Contribution Agreement between individual donors with the Basket Fund. A dedicated Fund and Project Management structure for the Nigeria UN COVID-19 Basket Fund managed by UNDP acts as the Secretariat to the Project Board and oversees disbursement of funds, procurement of services and goods and accountability.

...us all, and no institution can battle it alone. It is therefore critical that we act in solidarity as a private sector actor and as a foundation, to beat this common enemy. Our goal is to contribute to the Government's ongoing efforts of tackling the spread of the coronavirus and the arising challenges." said, Aliko Dangote, President and Chief Executive of Dangote group and Chairman of the Aliko Dangote Foundation.

The UN in Nigeria is working closely with the Government to accelerate response to the pandemic; tackle the spread of the virus and ensure optimum care for those affected. The Nigeria UN COVID-19 Basket fund is designed to serve within the One

Receiving the contribution on behalf of the UN in Nigeria, Mr. Edward Kallon, UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Nigeria noted that, Nigeria's win against the coronavirus requires a whole-of-society approach that brings all stakeholders on board to support the national response. He further commended the Nigerian private sector for its active role in supporting the Government, to mobilise the critical resources to tackle COVID-19. "We need all hands on deck to help the Government to keep the healthcare systems working and be able to address the development challenges exacerbated by the pandemic." He said.

'My Children Will Eat'



Yahabba Adam enjoys a meal with her children at their home

With the ongoing conflict in North East Nigeria, thousands of internally displaced people in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe (BAY) states remain dependent on humanitarian assistance. Nutrition support and cash transfers from the UN World Food Programme (WFP) are bringing a ray of hope in dire conditions in the BAY states.

Teachers' Village, a crowded IDP camp in Maiduguri, Borno State, is a grim reminder that all is not well yet. Ramatu Mohammed, a 30-year-old widow, has been living here since last year after fighters attacked her village of Baga, near the border with Cameroon.

"The fighters killed my husband," says Ramatu. "I fled with my children... I came here with nothing. Our life has not been easy," says the mother of five children.

Her set of twins, who were barely one month old at the time, cried incessantly from hunger when they reached Teachers' Village camp. Ramatu was malnourished and her breast milk had gone dry; she could not feed her twins. WFP and its partner, the International Mercy Corps (IMC), registered them in the nutrition support programme.

Since December 2016, WFP has been providing monthly food and nutrition assistance to conflict-affected people — including pregnant or breastfeeding women, as well as children under the age of five who receive specialised nutritious foods to prevent malnutrition — in the BAY states.

The monthly rations of fortified nutritious foods have paid off. "My twins love the porridge (Super Cereal) from WFP and it is really helping them to be in good health," says Ramatu.

But she would have preferred to be home in Baga. "We hardly sleep due to the conflict. Our mind is not at rest. Every day comes with one issue or the other," she says.

Smiling Mother

In the Maiduguri city centre, Yahabba Adam, 30, smiles as she combs through the market buying food items that she plans to cook. She has just received N17, 000 from WFP's cash assistance programme.

"My children will eat. I am happy that they are not going to go hungry," says Yahabba. As a single mother, Yahabba is hopeful. She wants to become a tailor and a cap maker, skills she developed while living in her village in Konduga, a small town in Borno State. She grew up on her father's farm where he produced grains. Then she married and lived with her new family not far from her childhood home.

Five years ago, her village was attacked. Many people were killed. Yahabba and her children were among the few who survived.

"My father hid us inside a ditch far from our house. My father was caught by the fighters. My neighbour said he was killed. But I don't know. I never saw his body," she says.

Yahabba has since lived in Dalori camp in Maiduguri with her four children. The whereabouts of her husband are unknown. "Right now, I must care for my children. They are all I have now."

Ramatu and Yahabba are among the 3 million people struggling to meet their food needs in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states. According to the latest food security analyses, this number could rise to more than 3.7 million people during the lean season in June to August if sustained humanitarian assistance is not available.

UN launches COVID-19 Design Challenge For Nigerian Youth



UNICEF Nigeria, together with government, private sector and global partners, launched a design challenge targeting Nigerian youth on May 13, 2020, inspiring them to create solutions to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nigeria is the first country to launch the COVID-19 Design Challenge for UNICEF in the world.

Government partners include the National Centre for Disease Control, National Information Technology Development Agency, and Office for ICT Innovation Entrepreneurship.

The challenge involves youth actively in finding innovative ways to fight COVID-19 and provide young people with opportunities to creatively engage the current and future challenges the pandemic provides.

The challenge will use an online design thinking platform called CARTEDO with the aim to: democratize access to reliable information and capitalize on youth networks to drive awareness of COVID-19; give youth a voice in finding ways to prevent and mitigate the longer-term impacts of COVID-19 on Nigerian society; develop youth skills that will enhance their future employability.

While sourcing innovative ideas from Nigerian youth, the challenge also seeks to build their design thinking skills. Participants who complete the challenge will receive a certificate of participation.

The platform will provide youth with the opportunity to contribute to the fight against COVID-19 and propose solutions for the post COVID-19 era. The challenge will run from 13 May – 13 June and participants will be able to redeem awards like mentorships, job matching, technical skills, training and capacity-building, provided by partners such as CC Hub, Lagos Innovates, Jobberman, Ventures Platform, and Saed Connect, among others.

The challenge is being run in the context of a youth digital partnership with the Botnar Foundation, and in close collaboration with Generation Unlimited and U-Report. Global partner Goodwall will provide cash benefits of N100,000 every week to participants with the best idea. To get updates about the design challenge, simply send an SMS with the word JOIN to 24453, which will allow you to participate – together with over 3.6 million Nigerians - on the U-Report Platform.

To access the COVID-19 Design Challenge website, click [here](#).

COVID-19 Brings Relief For Some Nigerian Children

Sixteen-year old *Kingsley woke in his bed in the morning of 2 September 2019, with no inkling that his next bedtime would be spent in a police cell.

The teenager, who lives with his mother in Calabar, was arrested when policemen raided his neighborhood after an armed robbery took place there.

The youngster recalls that he was walking down his street when confusion suddenly broke out. People were running in all directions, gunshots rang out, and amid all this, police officers were seen randomly picking up anyone they could.

Kingsley was one of the unlucky ones. He was arrested by the police that day.

At the police station, he was forced, at gunpoint to admit to armed robbery. When he told the police that he was only 16 years old, they instead recorded his age as 18 - instantly making it legally possible to detain him in an adult correctional facility.

Kingsley said he was placed in a cell together with adults. He described his time there as “horrible.”

“They did not beat us. But we were not treated well. They would not let us go outside. We had time to roam the yard, but prison officials demanded bribes before they would let you move outside within the prison walls. The food was terrible,” he said.

But on 6 May 2020, following efforts by UNICEF, he was suddenly released.

Kingsley – along with twenty-five other children locked in correctional facilities in Cross River State – was freed in an attempt to decongest all correctional facilities in the country, due to the need to put in place physical distancing measures in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

UNICEF, in collaboration with UNODC and partners, had been working for the release of children locked-up with adults in correctional facilities and mostly in pre-trial for years.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and measures to decongest correctional facilities by federal and state authorities gave UNICEF, UNODC and the Basic Rights Counsel Initiative



Photo: UNICEF Nigeria/2020

(BRICI) an opportunity to heighten their advocacy to get children released from correctional facilities.

More than 1,000 Nigerian children are in thought to be in detention, some of them in correctional facilities meant for adults. Given the overcrowding in these facilities and the current COVID-19 pandemic, these children are exposed to contracting the virus.

“UNICEF will continue to work to secure the release of more children in detention, while providing support to social workers who are ensuring effective counselling and family tracing for children unlawfully imprisoned,” said Victor Atuchukwu, UNICEF’s Child Protection Specialist in Enugu State.

Before his arrest, Kingsley had dropped out of school, following the death of his father, and was learning how to make furniture to help support his mother. He expressed relief for his freedom. He has now rejoined his family and gone back to learning furniture-making.

Cross River State is leading the way in strengthening child protection systems in Nigeria through a programme that began eight years ago, with the support of UNICEF, the EU and USAID.

*Name changed to protect the identity of the child.

Nigeria drives routine immunization amid COVID-19



Aisha Iliasu holds her 9-month old baby for a routine measles vaccination at the Hasiya Bayero Paediatric Hospital in downtown Kano.

Initially, information collected by WHO from various hospitals and clinics in Kano suggested that there had been a worrying decline in client attendance at health facilities due to a lack of awareness of continued routine immunization, as well as fear of COVID-19 infection and transport issues arising from lockdown measures. Some health care workers were also afraid to go to work as a number of their colleagues tested positive for the virus.

To improve delivery and continuity of immunization services in Nigeria, and

At the Hasiya Bayero Paediatric Hospital in downtown Kano, the commercial nerve centre of northern Nigeria, Aisha Iliasu sits patiently among other women and children on a concrete bench in the waiting room. Two large posters providing tips for COVID-19 prevention are taped to the wall beside her.

Despite the lockdown in place in the city, Ms Iliasu has come to the hospital for a routine measles vaccination for her nine-month old son.

“I do not want him to miss the vaccine. He has taken all the doses so far, and this is the final one,” she says. “I was initially skeptical about coming to the facility as I thought the health workers would not be around, but all the nurses are here and attending to the children as usual.”

Every year, millions of lives are saved due to routine immunization, which is widely recognized as a one of the most successful and cost-effective public health interventions. However, in Nigeria, over three million children under one year are still either unvaccinated or under-vaccinated.

The COVID-19 pandemic has posed new obstacles to vaccination in the country as well as to the surveillance of vaccine-preventable diseases across much of Africa. As the continent responds to the novel coronavirus, there is a significant risk that more children will miss out on life-saving vaccines that can prevent diseases like measles and polio.

During World Vaccination Week at the end of April, Dr Matshidiso Moeti, the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Director for Africa, reiterated the importance of continuing to “protect communities from vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks during this unprecedented time,” urging African countries to take innovative approaches to maintain routine immunization services and to implement strong infection prevention control practices in all health facilities.

WHO has developed new guidelines on immunization in the context of COVID-19 that stress the need for this dynamic approach and urge countries to prioritize the continuation of routine immunization of children and other at-risk groups.

to make sure both health care workers and patients are safe, the National Primary Healthcare Development Agency (NPHCDA), with support from WHO, has put measures in place to ensure that no eligible person misses routine immunization in the country.

“Several guidelines and materials have been developed to guide the conduct of immunization and other primary health care services at relevant facilities during the COVID-19 pandemic,” says Dr Faisal Shuaib, Director General of the NPHCDA.

WHO Nigeria has provided technical support in the development of these guidelines. “This is integrated in the COVID-19 response plan for primary health care, an important pillar for providing essential health services during this pandemic,” said Kofi Boateng, WHO Nigeria focal point for Routine Immunization.

WHO has also supported NPHCDA in setting up virtual trainings on infection prevention control measures for local health care workers, which has helped those previously afraid to go to work to feel safe to return and empowered them to ensure the well-being of their patients. These health care workers have also now been provided with crucial personal protective equipment.

Community sensitization programmes on routine vaccinations have also been scaled up in recent weeks, and have included door to door dissemination of important information materials. These programmes have also entailed consistent engagements with traditional and religious leaders, who play a key role in mobilizing their communities.

Currently, routine immunization is ongoing in all 36 Nigerian states. Mairo Mohammed, a nurse who administers vaccines at Hasiya Bayero Paediatric Hospital, said there has been a marked improvement in turnout compared to the beginning of the pandemic.

“Initially, we had the challenge of low turnout from both health workers and caregivers who were scared to come to health facilities for fear of infection,” she said. “But now they have been made aware that immunization activities are still going on as usual, and they also better understand the measures they can take to protect themselves.”

Cash-Based Assistance Offers Support To Vulnerable People In Borno, Adamawa And Yobe States



Sabatu John

been burned to the ground during the clashes, along with all of her belongings. The sewing machine that had long been her source of income was damaged. With no roof over her head and no means of working to provide for her family, Sabatu had to start all over again. She worked long hours on a small family farm alongside her husband, trying to scrape together enough food for her children to survive. The days were grueling and long, yet the food they were able to harvest was not

In the north-eastern Nigerian states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe, where 7.9 million people are currently in need of life-saving humanitarian aid, violent attacks and insecurity in some areas have made it difficult for humanitarian actors to reach some of the most vulnerable people. Finding efficient and effective means of delivering assistance is essential.

Since 2016, humanitarian actors have increasingly been providing support through cash-based assistance to ensure that essential needs are met, while providing an avenue for the most vulnerable to become self-reliant and participate in economic activities that boost local markets.

More than one third of all humanitarian assistance in 2019 in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states was through cash and voucher assistance, reaching more than 1.5 million people throughout the year. In 2016, only nine per cent of humanitarian aid was provided through cash and voucher assistance (CVA). This demonstrates the increasing use of CVA, based on not only its cost effectiveness but its effectivity in building bridges towards recovery from the crisis.

In May, the Nigeria Cash Working Group issued its first-ever annual report which provides an overview and analysis of the impact that cash programming and activities have had in the humanitarian response in north-east Nigeria.

“The success stories, testimonies and analysis documented in this report indicate that cash and voucher assistance is not just another means of providing humanitarian assistance but a critical game-changer in the humanitarian space, with ripple effects that extend far beyond immediate, life-saving aid,” said Mr. Yassine Gaba, Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator in Nigeria.

The report also highlights the direct impact that cash assistance can have on the lives of the most vulnerable people in north-east Nigeria. Sabatu John, an internally displaced woman from Adamawa State, is one of them.

Sabatu, a mother of five young children, was able to get back on her feet thanks to a business cash grant. Like many women in north-east Nigeria, she fled her home after a violent attack by non-State armed groups on her community of Michika in Adamawa State, where she had been working as a tailor. Once the area became secure again, she was able to safely return to Michika with her family. However, the home she had once known had

enough to feed their entire family.

Sabatu was desperate to start sewing again and make her own living. When a humanitarian organization offered her a business cash grant of 129,990 Naira (US\$335) she could hardly believe her fortune. She immediately bought a brand-new sewing machine, generator, fabric, needles and thread to get her tailoring business up and running once again. She even had enough money left over to purchase some sandals, slippers and shoes that go along with the clothes, handbags and purses she sews to diversify her business.

Now Sabatu makes between 4,000 and 12,000 Naira (US\$10-\$30) per week and rejoices that her livelihood has been restored, as she now has a steady source of income to support her family.

Sabatu’s story is a testament to the role that cash assistance can play in uplifting the most vulnerable people in conflict-ridden areas in north-east Nigeria, creating an avenue for their self-determination and recovery. Cash assistance gives autonomy for crisis-affected people to make independent decisions, thereby enabling them to pursue livelihoods and stimulate the local economy, ultimately shifting away from a reliance on life-saving aid and towards a path of resilience and development.

To find out more about how cash and voucher assistance is supporting the most vulnerable people in north-east Nigeria, read the Cash Working Group annual report 2019.



Nigeria Police Partners UN, EU To Safeguard Frontline Officers Against COVID-19 Pandemic



AIG Medical Paul Laki (2nd left) with Oliver Stolpe, UNODC Country Representative in Nigeria (Centre) displaying the materials.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes, the Nigeria Police Force, and the European Union, launched new Guidelines for Policing During the COVID-19 Emergency, tailored specifically for the Nigerian context.

Based on guidance provided by the World Health Organization, INTERPOL, and other leading international experts, these Guidelines set out practical steps that officers can take to reduce their risk of infection while working to prevent the spread of this disease and to protect the public from criminal activity. 10,000 copies of the new Guidelines, printed in booklet form, are being distributed to frontline officers.

Around the world, Police officers, whose duties bring them in close and frequent contact with members of the public, have suffered disproportionately from the COVID-19 virus. Sadly, in Nigeria the virus has already claimed the life of Deputy Commissioner of Police Francis Bissong, Head of the Zonal Criminal Investigation Department in Benin.

By following the practical advice contained in these Guidelines, especially simple steps like wearing personal protective equipment, maintaining social distancing, and frequently washing hands, it is hoped that officers will be able to undertake their duties in greater confidence and safety.

Launching the Guidelines UNODC Country Representative Oliver Stolpe said: "We often ask our police officers to take tremendous risks on our behalf, and the COVID-19 crisis is no exception. Police officers in Nigeria are serving on the frontline in the fight against this virus and are often the first representatives of the state that the sick can turn to for help. We owe it to them to do everything in our power to enable them to go about their duties in as safe a manner as possible in such troubled times. We trust that these Guidelines will be a significant step towards achieving this goal."

EU Ambassador Ketil Karlsen also welcomed the initiative: "Raising awareness to limit the spread of the disease is of paramount importance. Along with health professionals, Nigerian law enforcement organizations are at the forefront of the COVID-19 response. By supporting the publication and distribution of these new Guidelines, the EU would like to contribute to safer working conditions for Nigerian police officers."

Finally, the Inspector General of Police Mohammed Adamu extended his personal thanks and gratitude to UNODC and the European Union for their assistance: "I would like to thank our international partners for working with us to prepare these Guidelines, my officers are doing a top notch job during this crisis and anything that helps them to stay safe while serving the public makes a tremendous contribution to the national effort to eradicate COVID-19."

EU, UN Donate COVID-19 PPEs To Drug Treatment Centres

The EU, through UNODC, has scaled up its ongoing support to ensure access to treatment services by drug users in the face of the ongoing COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions, with the donation of personal protective equipment (PPEs) and other supplies to 25 drug treatment centres in Nigeria.

Representatives of EU and UNODC delivered the equipment and supplies on Tuesday, 12 May 2020, to YouthRise, a non-governmental organization providing community-based treatment services to female drug users in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

The donation is to support COVID-19 prevention among drug users in Nigeria. It includes disposable facemasks, disposable gloves, hand sanitizers, handwash liquid, and infrared thermometers. Also included are information, education and communication (IEC) materials in English, Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa and Pidgin English, that provide information on protective measures against the virus and contact details of DrugHelpNet, the network of drug treatment service providers offering tele-health services to drug users.

During the handover Kurt Cornelis, Head of Cooperation from the EU delegation to Nigeria and ECOWAS said "In line with other COVID-19 related support to Nigeria, the EU, through its implementing partner UNODC, has adopted frontline and specialist interventions that can respond to the needs of those with substance use disorders who may experience limited access to health and elevated health risks."



L- R: Kurt Cornelis, Head of Cooperation, EU Delegation to Nigeria and ECOWAS; Ifeanyi Okechukwu, Executive Director, YouthRise and Oliver Stolpe, Representative of UNODC in Nigeria at the event.

Oliver Stolpe, Representative of the UNODC in Nigeria, while thanking the EU for their support, mentioned the importance of energizing the civil society and health networks supported by UNODC in responding to the COVID-19 in Nigeria.

Receiving the supplies, the Executive Director of YouthRISE, Ifeanyi Okechukwu expressed appreciation for the timely donation of personal protective equipment, IEC materials and provision of DrugHelpNet service in line with COVID-19 Emergency response from EU through UNODC Nigeria.

This donation is expected to ensure that drug users, and service providers, are protected and educated about COVID-19 and can continue to access treatment services in a safe and secure environment. With the DrugHelpNet contacts drug users will be able to access services even if they cannot visit the treatment centres.

UN Commends Nigerian Workers For Their Commitment In Combating COVID-19

As was the case in other parts of the world, Nigerian workers celebrated their May Day in a style never anticipated due to the emergence of COVID-19 with its negative impacts across countries and sectors of economies. COVID-19 had suddenly berthed on the shores of nations with its dos and don'ts which forced workers to devise novel ways of celebrating the day.



On Friday, the 1st of May 2020, Nigeria workers under the auspices of Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and Trade Union Congress (TUC) celebrated their May Day in a unique way devoid of the usual Eagle's Square pomp and pageantry. Despite conducting the celebration at its secretariat, the International Labour Organisation sent its solidarity message to the Nigeria Labour Congress on the occasion.

In his goodwill message, the Director of ILO Country Office, Abuja, Mr. Dennis Zulu, commended NLC for the roles it has been playing in supporting the working class and in sensitizing Nigerian citizens, thereby creating awareness on the COVID-19 pandemic. Making reference to the theme of 2020 celebration, "COVID-19 Pandemic and its Socio-Economic Impact on the Nigerian Workers", Mr Zulu acknowledged that the negative consequences of the outbreak of the COVID-19 on workers both in the formal and informal economy of Nigeria are enormous.

He regretted that the impact of COVID-19 has resulted in the closure of many businesses while major companies, especially those engaged in tourism, mining, construction, banking, and fishery were experiencing a reduction in operations and had significantly scaled down activities. This he said has led to joblessness and reduced income generation among the economically viable groups. While bemoaning the fate of the Informal Sector workers whose sustenance was dependent on daily activities, he added that lockdowns, though necessary, had worsen the economic situation of these numerous informal economy workers in Nigeria. He expressed the commitment of the ILO to continue to support Nigerian workers, especially at this difficult time.

In his speech, the President of NLC, Comrade Ayuba Wabba, congratulated Nigerian workers for another May Day which he said offered an opportunity to speak to issues that affected the

welfare and wellbeing of workers and sought solutions to same. He observed that the 2020 May Day was unique, in that for the first time, the commemoration of the Workers' Day was low-keyed and took place behind closed doors, void of the usual pomp and parade. He attributed the low-key celebration to the novel corona virus disease (Covid-19) pandemic which was ravaging several cities and almost every country of the world.

Regretting the number of human lives lost to the deadly virus across the world, he lamented that the rate of infection in Nigeria could be more than what the official figures presented as our country's health system has been struggling with contact tracing and testing for the virus. He acknowledged that humanity was passing through another trying time of a "major public health care of fatalistic proportions" after the Spanish flu of 1918 -1920. He stated that the accompanying global lockdown was perhaps the broadest since the end of the Second World War, opining that the world was at war with an invisible biological enemy. He viewed COVID-19 as a deadly enemy that had no respect for borders, race, rules of engagement, and showed no qualms about socio-economic status. He said that humanity was dealing with a foe that desecrated sacred places with impunity, an enemy that could not be forced to a negotiation table or a truce.

Quoting the ILO, Comrade Wabba regretted that COVID-19 social lockdown measures had affected almost 2.7 billion workers worldwide or around 81 per cent of the world's workforce. He commended all the workers for cooperating with governments to fight the pandemic, especially the front-line workers for putting their lives on the line to stem the tide of covid 19 spread and death. He also commended the Federal Government for the insurance cover of those workers.

UN Supports Women Affairs Ministry With COVID-19 Palliatives For Vulnerable Women and Girls



UN Women Representative to Nigeria and ECOWAS, Ms. Comfort Lamptey (Right), presents a cheque to the Honourable Minister of Women Affairs, Dame Pauline Tallen (Left). Photo Credit: UN Women/Maimuna Aboki.

The COVID-19 crisis has had devastating impacts on the lives of women and girls in Nigeria. The UN Secretary General's policy brief on the impact of COVID-19 on women shines a light on the harsh economic realities. "Compounded economic impacts are felt especially by women and girls who are generally earning less, saving less, and holding insecure jobs or living close to poverty." Women in Nigeria make up 47.8 % of sole owners of microenterprises and 22 % of SMEs, with a high concentration in specific economic sectors, such as wholesale, manufacturing, accommodation, food services and agriculture. These women-led enterprises will be heavily impacted by disruptions in supply chains and closure of markets; impacting on their ability to feed their families and be independent.

The UN Secretary General's policy brief recommends that fiscal stimulus packages be designed to integrate gender concerns in the COVID-19 response. In efforts to target the support at women, UN Women presented a cheque equivalent of \$100,000 (One Hundred Thousand Dollars), to the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs towards palliatives for vulnerable Nigerian women. The donation was officially presented on May 6, 2020, to the Honourable Minister of Women Affairs, Dame Pauline Tallen, by the UN Women Representative to Nigeria and ECOWAS, Ms. Comfort Lamptey.

The funds will be channeled towards the procurement and distribution of relief and hygiene supplies including food items, soap, masks, and sanitizers, which will be procured from women-owned businesses as part of the promotion of the affirmative procurement policy. These palliative measures are targeted at reaching 15,300 vulnerable women and girls who have been worst hit by the effects of the crisis, in 17 states across the six geo-political zones in Nigeria.

While the Ministry of Women Affairs will provide the oversight function and monitoring alongside women organisations and networks in the targeted states, UN Women is providing the technical assistance and coordination support. Women leaders from the African Women Leaders Network (AWLN) Nigeria chap-

ter, Christian Association of Nigeria Women's Wing (CANWW), Association of Women Living with HIV/AIDS in Nigeria (ASWHAN) and UN Women Implementing Partners have also been contacted to support the State Ministry of Women Affairs with the identification of vulnerable women and distribution of items.

During the presentation ceremony, Ms. Comfort Lamptey highlighted the high concentration of Nigerian women in micro and small-scale enterprises which will be heavily impacted by disruptions in supply chains and closure of markets during the lockdown. The adverse socio-economic effects of the COVID-19 crisis compounded by necessary lockdown measures would result in the debilitation of women's abilities to feed their families and be independent.

The Minister of Women Affairs thanked UN Women for the donation and show of support. She highlighted the efforts and resilience of Nigerian women during this challenging time and commended the efforts of frontline workers and journalists for their selfless service. "Support will be prioritized for the most vulnerable women and those women who earn a daily income." She further thanked the UN family in Nigeria, under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator, Mr. Edward Kallon, for highlighting the need to prioritize women's empowerment through the UN-managed Basket Fund to guide the COVID-19 response in Nigeria. In April 2020, the UN System in Nigeria launched the Basket Fund, with an initial funding of \$2 million to provide support to the government for the procurement of essential medical supplies to vulnerable Nigerians, including women.

UN Women through its support to the Ministry of Women Affairs will continue to contribute to strengthening the resilience and coping capacities of some of the most affected households, including vulnerable female-headed households, poor women with disabilities, and those affected by conflict in the country. The targeted support is also geared at improving the awareness and adoption of hygiene practices as measures to prevent the target beneficiaries and their communities from contracting the COVID-19 disease.



Captions, from left to right in a clockwise direction:

1. *Hon. Minister of Health, Dr. Osagie Ehanire (Left) receives in audience, UN Resident and Humanitarian-Coordinator Edward Kallon (Middle) and WHO Officer-in-Charge, Dr Fiona Braka, to discuss joint efforts to support #Covid_19 response & resource mobilisation for the Basket Fund as well as strengthening state-level coordination and scaling up of risk comm & community engagement. Abuja 7 May.*
2. *In aiding the fight against #COVID19, EU and UNICEF-supported vocational centres in Borno are producing 40,000 face-masks and 12,000 bars of soap, which will be distributed to Internally Displaced Persons.*
3. *Borno State Government with the support of WHO launched “#COVID19 Heroes’ campaign as a strategy to demystify #Coronavirus stigmatization. The Deputy Governor revealed that 135 persons who have been discharged from the isolation centres are not just survivors but heroes and heroines. Maiduguri 29 May.*

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