



As Nigeria's COVID-19 Cases surge, UN And EU Respond To Save Lives



Holding flags from R-L: UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator of the UN in Nigeria, Mr Edwards Kallon; Nigeria's Minister of Health, Dr Osagie Ehanire and Head of the European Union Delegation to Nigeria and ECOWAS, Ambassador Ketil Karlsen, at the handing over ceremony held at the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport Abuja, on 20 June. *Photo: UN Nigeria/ Oluseyi Soremekun*

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Nigeria Humanitarian Fund (NHF) Announces US\$22.4M Allocation For 2020



As the total number of COVID-19 pandemic cases in Nigeria surged from 665 on 20 April, to 6,677 on 20 May and 19,808 on 20 June; coupled with fatality rising at the same period from 22 in April to 202 in May and 506 in June, it became clearer that the curve would, for a while, continue to be steep as testing is ramped up and delivery of essential medical supplies would have to be quickened to match the rapid surge and save lives.

The urgently needed boost to the Nigerian situation, however, came on 20 June 2020, when the United Nations system in Nigeria and the European Union, landed a shipment of vital medical supplies and handed over to the Federal Government of Nigeria to help fight the spread of coronavirus and safe treatment of affected people in the country.

The shipment, along with others coming soon, are valued at more than USD 22 million, and procured through the Nigeria/ One-UN COVID-19 Basket Fund, with a significant contribution from the European Union (EU). The current consignment includes, among other items, 545 oxygen concentrators, more than 100,000 test kits, infrared digital no-touch thermometers, numerous personal protective equipment (PPEs), laboratory supplies and emergency health kits that will boost the Nigerian Government's efforts COVID-19 response and care for those affected by the coronavirus.

The essential medical supplies will enhance efforts of the frontline responders providing care and treatment to people affected by the virus, increase testing capacity and early detection of those affected by the virus, and support...*continue on page 2.*

The Nigeria Humanitarian Fund (NHF), on 15 June 2020, announced a US\$22.4 million funding allocation for 2020 that will help address the increased vulnerability of people affected by both the COVID-19 pandemic and the existing humanitarian crisis in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states. This allocation is the fund's largest since the NHF's launch in February 2017 and comes at a critical time as north-east Nigeria enters its 11th year of a protracted crisis while grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Before and during the COVID-19 response, the Nigeria Humanitarian Fund has proven to be a rapid and flexible funding tool enabling aid actors to adapt to fast-changing humanitarian emergencies," said Mr. Edward Kallon, the Humanitarian Coordinator in Nigeria.

"With the new coronavirus now spreading across the country...*continue on page 2.*

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...the hospitalisation and management of COVID-19 cases. The supplies were handed over to the Government of Nigeria through the Federal Ministry of Health and the Presidential Task Force on COVID-19, and were officially presented by Mr. Edward Kallon, the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Nigeria and Ambassador Ketil Karlsen, Head of the European Union Delegation to Nigeria and ECOWAS, at an event attended by high-level delegates from the EU, Ministry of Health, Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and the UN.

“The arrival of the medical supplies will be a boost to the Government’s efforts to provide an efficient and effective healthcare response for those affected by the virus. These vital supplies co-funded by the EU will help us to both protect healthcare workers and ensure people are tested and treated as quickly as possible to save lives,” said Mr. Kallon.

Ambassador Karlsen, acknowledged that “Today we take a vital step in the response to the pandemic. The alliance between Team Europe, the PTF and the UN has proven very strong. This is partnership in practice when it matters the most. Addressing the health crisis in Nigeria and getting the economic wheels turning again are key priorities for the EU, all while making sure that we protect the most vulnerable,”

The growing COVID-19 crisis threatens to disproportionately impact communities not only as a health crisis in the short term but as a devastating social and economic crisis over the months and years to come. The One-UN COVID-19 response is working closely with the Nigerian Government in its pandemic response efforts through sharing crucial information with communities on how to protect themselves, infection prevention and control, epidemiology/surveillance and management of COVID-19 cases. The fund will also support income-generating opportunities for people whose livelihoods are most at risk through cash transfers and help restore supply chains disrupted by the pandemic.

“We must all work together to contain the pandemic in Nigeria – it is only through close joint efforts that we can keep Nigerians healthy and ensure good care for those affected. We will beat this virus in Nigeria – and the support we are receiving from partners such as the EU, UN and others brings us even closer to this ultimate goal,” said Mr. Boss Mustapha, Chair, Presidential Task Force (PTF) on COVID-19, represented by the Minister of Health, Dr Osagie Ehanire.

The UN in collaboration with the Government of Nigeria had on 6 April 2020, launched the One UN COVID-19 Response Basket Fund. The Basket Fund is designed to serve as the One COVID-19 Financing and Investment Platform, through which different stakeholders (including UN, other multilateral and bilateral donors, as well as private sector donors, foundations and philanthropists) can channel their financial support to the multi-sectoral efforts of the Presidential Task Force on COVID-19 Response.

The Basket Fund has mobilized US\$61.3 million, including US\$54.6 million from the European Union (EU); US\$2.2 million

from UN agencies; \$US4 million from the private sector (Dangote US\$ 3.8 million and AP Maersk US\$ 0.2 million); and US\$0.4 million from the Government of Switzerland.



A consignment of essential medical supplies landed by the United Nations system in Nigeria and the European Union, and handed over to the Government of Nigeria, on 20 June at Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja.



A cross-section of essential medical supplies landed by the United Nations system in Nigeria and the European Union, and handed over to the Government of Nigeria, on 20 June at Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja.



A cross-section of essential medical supplies handed over to the Government of Nigeria, by the UN and the EU on 20 June .

NHF Announces US\$22.4M (Continued from page 1)

..the Nigeria Humanitarian Fund swiftly provided emergency funds to procure essential personal protective equipment for frontline aid workers when the pandemic reached Nigeria. This allocation will further support urgent efforts in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states.”

The United Nations and humanitarian partners estimate that 7.9 million people were already in dire need of humanitarian assistance this year before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This number is expected to increase as the effects of the pandemic exacerbate humanitarian needs, including health services, food security and livelihoods.

“The impact of COVID-19 has made it even more essential for donors to contribute to the NHF and support aid organisations in adapting their response and providing critical life-saving assistance in north-east Nigeria,” Mr. Kallon explained.

The humanitarian crisis in north-east Nigeria remains among the most severe in the world today. Some 1.8 million people are internally displaced, with a majority of them living in host communities putting additional pressure on already stretched resources. Four out of five IDPs living in camps are in overcrowded conditions with makeshift and temporary shelters built in close proximity to each other. This funding allocation will help ensure that critical, life-saving assistance reaches Nigeria’s most vulnerable while curtailing the most devastating consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Tackling Hunger In Makoko, The ‘Venice Of Africa’

Residents of the world’s largest floating slum are keeping their hopes up as lockdown sinks their livelihoods



With the shortage of boats, getting a ride is difficult at the best of times. Photo: Damilola Onafuwa.

Makoko, an informal waterfront settlement in Lagos, Nigeria, is often referred to as the ‘Venice of Africa’. Here, thousands live in stilt houses nestled deep in murky black waters. At first glance, Makoko’s population could be considered at extreme risk from coronavirus. Hygiene and social distancing pose a serious challenge in these crammed conditions. On closer inspection, however, the global pandemic, which has infected more than 20,000 people and resulted in over 500 deaths in Nigeria, is the least of their worries.

Fishermen and fish sellers who account for most of the 100,000-odd people who live here in poverty have bigger concerns. Hunger and the ever-looming threat of eviction pose a bigger risk to residents’ way of life than disease or infection. Families who live on the water also depend on it for their livelihoods. “I work between five to six canoe trips in a day,” says Owolabi James, a canoe rider. “But since the coronavirus came and everyone was told to stay at home, I’ve only been doing about three trips daily.”

Nigeria is Africa’s biggest economy and, with 182 million people, the continent’s most populous country — the food security of millions of people is at stake as coronavirus wreaks havoc with incomes.

The Government is ramping up support for some of the most vulnerable groups in the country. The Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development, for instance, provides food rations to schoolchildren with the technical support of the UN World Food Programme (WFP) in Abuja and Lagos.

In Makoko, people must maintain multiple incomes to survive. Sarah TinsHEME is a tailor. The 24-year-old also helps her mother sell basic non-perishable food items such as bottled water, dry pasta and seasoning cubes. Most of her time is taken up in another way, however.

“My main occupation is selling fish,” says Sarah. “We smoke the fish beforehand.” The task of smoking usually falls to women

while men are occupied with sewing fishing nets, building and mending their canoes and then wading into the deep parts of the water to cast, as motorists zipping past on Lagos’s Third Mainland Bridge look on.

Everyone here — be they fish sellers, commercial canoe riders, canoe builders or canoe repairmen — relies on daily takings to survive. Makoko’s fish market, one of the largest in Lagos, is the beating heart of the community. It’s where families buy the food they need to eat, where they earn their living, and where most socialising is done.

With markets shut because of COVID-19, however, life as people knew it has stopped. Jutin Segodo Avlanwhen owns a hair salon. Her customers, market traders, have stopped coming. The 38-year-old mother of five says rationing meals for her children has become her new normal. Another challenge for people living here is the shortage of canoes for ferrying people around, not to mention social distancing.

Despite all the poverty, Owolabi James would not want to live anywhere else. “I like living here on the water,” he says. “I don’t have any plans to leave because I enjoy it here. I have my peace of mind, the cool breeze, and fresh air.” Even in lockdown, life floats on in the muddy, murky waters of Makoko.



Community Leaders Help Drive COVID-19 Testing In Nigeria's Kano



Kano Officials including WHO personnel in the field at a community in Kano.

When health officials in Kano State noted that turnouts for Covid-19 testing were consistently low across communities, they grew worried. Many residents were unaware of how serious the Covid-19 disease was, and despite sensitization messages on the pandemic, some did not believe COVID-19 was real. How then, officials worried, would health workers be able to convince residents to submit themselves for testing so infected persons could be isolated and treated?

In early June, officials led by Dr Tijani Hussaini, Kano State Incidence Manager for Covid-19 sought help from community leaders in Zango and Dorayi wards, located in the Kano Municipal Council and Gwale Local Government Areas (LGAs) respectively. State officials working with World Health Organization (WHO) and the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) had already determined that the two wards would be the pilot points for a state-wide sample collection: the wards recorded the highest COVID-19 positive cases and testing in both communities was essential.

The supportive response of the community leaders in the two wards took health officials by surprise. Not only were the leaders willing to explain to people in the community why they should cooperate and submit themselves for testing, but they would also make sure their own families led the way in the efforts, they said. They connected with Imams, as well as market women leaders and youth leaders to seek their support and ensure community members turn out for testing.

"The first information we delivered to people is that Coronavirus is a reality," says Alhaji Mohammed Rabiu Mahmud, a 67-year-old community leader in Zango Ward who spent three days speaking to community members. "Some believe that there is nothing like corona (COVID-19), but we, the leaders, believe there is. We told them it is a disease now all over the world and it can be transferred to another person through contact. So we convinced our people to come out."

Community members listened. It was a successful mobilization, Alhaji Mahmud says. More than 800 people in his ward alone, including his family and friends, turned out. Health officials collected over 2200 samples in Zango and Dorayi in four days of community testing. The samples accounted for 40.9% of the total 5,378 samples collected in Kano state since April 2020.

A spate of unexplained deaths recorded in Kano between March and April partly drove the urgency in the need for testing. On 28 April, President Muhammadu Buhari ordered a lockdown in the state and deployed experts to assist the state's investigations into the cases. The deaths were suspected to be COVID-19 related as infections spiked: Kano recorded its index COVID-19 case on 11 April, nearly two months after the country's first confirmed case. So far, Kano has reported 1200 cases.

"Most of the cases in Kano met the WHO's definition of community transmission as there were cases that could not be linked to travels and primary contact to cases," says Dr Loveday Nkwogu of WHO who worked with the Kano state team to map out high-risk communities. "This underscored the need to explore the extent of community transmission to avoid explosive outbreaks." Curtailing an outbreak in Nigerian cities and particularly in Kano is crucial. With an estimated population of 20 million, according to the state's government, Kano is one of Nigeria's most populous states. It is also the commercial nerve of the northern region and boasts a busy international airport.

In line with WHO guidelines, widespread testing remains essential in identifying, isolating and treating infected people. With the help of community leaders in Dorayi and Zango, the first step in community testing – sample collection – is completed in both wards. The test results are being released in batches. Alhaji Rabiu, a community leader, says some 25 cases were recorded in his community. Now, he and other community heads are following up by helping state officials trace the contacts of confirmed cases to identify them for further testing.

"I was sceptical because I thought there would be resistance from the communities," said Dr Hussaini, Kano state's COVID-19 Incident Manager. He noted that the collaboration with WHO and NCDC was crucial in identifying risk communities and spearheading the sample collection. Using geo-location data, the officials also assisted the state to map "silent wards" – areas with fewer recorded cases neighbouring the COVID-19-affected communities.

"Moving forward," Dr Hussaini added, "We will expand it (the sample collection) to all the LGAs of the metropolis and some silent LGAs based on the selection criteria. It is the way to go."

Reusable Masks Bring New Opportunities For Conflict-affected Youth



Face masks ready for distribution: To prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Borno State, young people are producing face masks and soap in vocational centres supported by UNICEF and the European Union. UNICEF Nigeria/2020

There is a busy whirl and clatter of sewing machines in a UNICEF-supported vocational centre in Maiduguri, north-east Nigeria. Inside the expansive hall, 18 young people sit at a distance from one another, their noses and mouths protected with cotton face masks.

Pedaling non-stop on her machine, Faisa Muhammed Abusa, 21, puts the finishing touches on a peach face mask. It is her twenty-fourth of the day. “It took me just one day to learn how to make face masks because UNICEF already trained us on how to sew school uniforms,” says Abusa.

“Now I sew at least 30 face masks every day. I am not happy about the outbreak of COVID-19, but I am pleased that I have an opportunity to do something to help others. It is also an additional skill for me,” she adds.

Abusa is an out-of-school youth who fled Gamboru, in the Ngala local government area of Borno State, due to the lack of security. According to Abusa, the vocational training has restored her confidence and dignity. “I was like a beggar before,” she said. “Now I now sew face masks. I use the income made from sewing to support my family.”

Abusa is one of 1,100 participants in an ongoing vocational skills empowerment project initiated by UNICEF, in partnership with the Borno State Agency for Mass Education (SAME) with funding from the European Union (EU). The project provides vocational skills and income generating opportunities to out-of-school youths, women who are heads of households, and girls released from armed groups. Since the project started in June 2019, hundreds of youths across six local government areas have acquired skills in sewing, poultry farming, shoe making, painting, interlocking tile-making and catering. They receive a monthly stipend for

the duration of the training. The project operates two centres in Maiduguri with 366 youths, 10 adolescent girls and 24 female household heads benefitting from the programme.

Abubakar Mustapha, 25, fled his home and now lives in Bakassi Camp and participated in the training. He now makes between 200 and 300 bars of soap every day. Originally from Gwoza, near the Cameroon border, Mustapha says his life has changed significantly since he fled to Maiduguri in 2014, as a result of the ongoing conflict in the region.

“I am learning new skills that can make a difference and keep people safe. I can earn an income from it,” he says. “We were told that handwashing with soap can kill the COVID-19 virus. The government needs my skills and my people need my skills.”

Trainers estimate the daily output capacity to be 1,500 face masks and 700 bars of soap. Management ensures adherence to social distancing and provides regular handwashing with soap and water. As the number of COVID-19 infections continue to grow in Nigeria, the young people have their work cut out for them, with a production target of 40,000 face masks and 12,000 bars of soap for vulnerable families over the next month.

Like Abusa and Mustapha, 20-year-old Duduwa Samaila relocated to Maiduguri a few years ago. She relishes her chance for a better income and to contribute to the fight against COVID-19. “I am excited for an opportunity to do something with my hands,” she says. With many other young people across Borno also learning new skills, the potentially larger benefit of the project is to build more resilient communities.

“Before my enrolment in the programme, I was unemployed and living on handouts,” says Samalia. “I will just say that in every cloud, there is a silver lining.”

UN, BIC Bring Color to Lives of Displaced Populations in North-East Nigeria



Artistic workshops allow displaced children in north-east Nigeria to express themselves. Photo: Jorge Galindo/IOM

On Thursday, 11 June, the world's leading stationary brand BIC donated 28,000 writing and coloring items to the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The donation—color pencils, pens and whiteboard markers—will support IOM's mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) to internally displaced people (IDPs).

In Nigeria's embattled north-east, millions of people continue to endure the impact of a decade-long humanitarian crisis. Most recently, on 9 June, an attack attributed to non-state armed groups claimed the lives of 81 people in the Gubio Local Government Area, 80 kilometers from Borno State's capital, Maiduguri. Forced into displacement, 1.8 million IDPs face risks to their mental health and wellbeing. IOM's MHPSS activities organized in resource centres known as Safe Spaces in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe States largely depend on the availability of stationery materials.

IOM's MHPSS programme in Nigeria began in the aftermath of the abduction of the Chibok schoolgirls in 2014.

Today, mobile teams operate Safe Spaces in 13 locations - seven in the Maiduguri Metropolitan Council, Jere and Konduga, and six in harder-to-reach locations. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, these mobile teams have readjusted their intervention by providing door-to-door assistance to IDPs instead of to large gatherings, which might increase the risk of disease transmission.

"Safe Spaces in IDPs camps provide social, ritual and recreational activities as well as informal education for adults and children," explained Olga Rebollo, IOM Nigeria MHPSS Programme Manager. "Artistic workshops and other recreational activities, as well as informal education sessions such as languages and math, require material support: pens and other writing and coloring products."

Additional services include psychosocial first aid, small-scale conflict mediation, lay counselling, gender-based violence (GBV) sensitization and awareness raising.

"This contribution signals the key role of the private sector to continue delivering assistance to conflict-affected populations including children who would otherwise have no access to these materials," said Abraham Tamrat, Head of IOM sub-office in Lagos, who received the donation on behalf of IOM during a handover ceremony. "We are immensely grateful for BIC's support for IDPs in Nigeria," he added.

In 2019, IOM MHPSS teams reached 205,051 individuals living in camps, camp-like settings and host communities in Nigeria. IOM promotes positive coping mechanisms and resilience among the displaced population by allowing men, women and children to express their fears and hopes through artistic workshops. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 response in late March 2020, IOM MHPSS teams have reached 14,796 individuals living in camps, camp-like settings and host communities through various MHPSS services and activities across field locations in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe.

Said Adeyemi Ojo BIC's Business Development Manager for Nigeria: "At BIC, we believe that we have a responsibility to make a meaningful contribution to our communities and we are proud to support the International Organization for Migration with their activities in Nigeria."

Adeyemi Ojo added: "Stationery products can be used in a number of activities that enable students to continue their education and help reduce stress and anxiety. We hope that the BIC writing and coloring items donated today will have a positive impact on the adults and children who will use them."

DrugHelpNet: A Lifeline For Female Drug Users In The Midst Of A Pandemic

Yemisi, a student in one of the more than 170 Nigerians universities, is pregnant and a drug user. As a result of the COVID19 imposed lockdown, her university was closed and she had to go back home to stay with her family, a typically conservative Nigerian family, who are unaware of her drug use habit or that she is pregnant without being married.

Yemisi, already 5 months pregnant, is yet to enroll in an antenatal programme and uses a cocktail of drugs (cannabis, codeine and diazepam) which are all harmful to her and her unborn child. She worries in particular about her father's reaction, who is severely ill. Finding out about her situation, she fears, may lead to severe consequences for his health. Her anxieties have led her to increase her drug use.

When Yemisi for the first time called the counsellors at DrugHelpNet she described her situation: "I use drugs to cope with feelings of anxiety, failure and disappointment. I'm pregnant and worried that my sick father will find out and it might lead to his death and I can't bear that thought. I'm worried more that I might not have access to drugs and might not cope with my current situation without using drugs. I'm still traumatized from the brutal loss of my mother during the farmer- herder crisis in our community. My life is ruined and I feel useless".

Help arrived for Yemisi via a friend who shared with her one of the telephone numbers of DrugHelpNet, a network of drug treatment service professionals providing over-the-phone assistance to drug users during the lockdown.

Yemisi now says: "Before now I felt this pandemic had strangled the last ray of hope I had to make things right. In these three weeks I learnt how to cope with my cravings during this period of lockdown. My sleep has improved. I'm also not using as much as before".

Yemisi is one of more than 1,025 drug users who have benefited from DrugHelpNet since its launch in early April 2020 in



direct response to the COVID-19 related lockdown and similar restrictions severely impacting on the access to drug treatment and counselling for the more than 3 million Nigerians living with some form of drug use disorder. DrugHelpNet is made up of 80 frontline health workers, including medical doctors, drug counsellors and allied professionals across the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria as well as the seven community-based drug treatment drop-in-centres supported under the European Union funded "Response to Drugs and Related Organised Crime Project", which is implemented by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

E-Teaching To Promote The Rule Of Law In Nigeria: E4J Champions Speak Out

Despite the recent easing of lockdown measures in Nigeria, up to 174 universities and polytechnic institutions remain closed to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Yet, teaching and learning must continue. UNODC has been working closely with lecturers across the world to increase online and digital teaching on rule of law related topics including but not limited to



Dr. Matthew Ayibakuro, Lecturer, Faculty of Law, Niger Delta University, Nigeria

integrity and ethics, cyber-crime, organized crime, wildlife crime and corruption. Through its Education for Justice Initiative (E4J), UNODC organized a series of e-workshops with academics from various Nigerian higher education institutions to present the E4J university modules, discuss the role of academia in promoting the SDGs and share experiences on the use of E4J tools and resources in Nigeria. Among the participants were E4J Champions Dr. Matthew Ayibakuro and Dr. Helen Uchenna Agu who shared

their experience working with E4J tools.

Also, **Dr. Helen Uchenna Agu, Lecturer, International Environmental law, University of Nigeria Nsukka** with special interest on wildlife, fishery and forest crime which she said is interestingly aligned with her research agenda had a one year Visiting Scholar/ post-doctoral Research fellow experience under the Alliance for African Partnership (AAP) at Michigan State University, USA.

According to her own narrative, she fell in love with the E4J initiative as a result of her background training in international environmental law and post-doctoral research experience. According to her, "I developed the zeal and determination to have my students at the University of Nigeria take benefit of this rich knowledge package, not just in my area of expertise (wildlife crime) but also all the other university modules. I strongly believe that as a law teacher, I have the rare opportunity of imparting the next generation of lawyers to become rule of law ambassadors to curb the many ever-evolving societal ills such as cybercrime, human trafficking, terrorism, corruption, wildlife crime and other forms of organized crime."



Dr. Helen Uchenna Agu, Lecturer, International Environmental law, University of Nigeria Nsukka

Borno: UN Appalled By Recent Attacks On Civilians And A Humanitarian Facility



The month of June has been marked by increased insecurity in the north-eastern State of Borno. The United Nations condemned a series of attacks that took place in Gubio, Monguno and Nganzai Local Government Areas (LGA).

On the afternoon of 9 June, 81 civilians were killed and many others wounded when armed actors aboard motorcycles mounted a brutal attack on Felo community in Gubio LGA, 80 kilometres away from the state capital Maiduguri. The assailants set ablaze homes with civilians still inside and stole more than 1,000 heads of cattle, damaging the livestock of the community. The attack was the deadliest recorded in north-central Borno State since July 2019 and has sent shockwaves across the humanitarian community.

"I extend my sincere condolences to the families of the innocent people who lost their lives in this abhorrent act. They are mothers, fathers, daughters and sons who should never have been a target," Mr Kallon said.

On 13 June, violent attacks by non-state armed groups in Monguno and Nganzai LGAs killed many civilians, including a four-year old girl. At least 37 other civilians were injured and a major humanitarian facility was damaged. That day, non-state armed group operatives aboard light trucks mounted with heavy artillery raided Goni Usmanti community in Nganzai LGA before penetrating the town of Monguno around 11.45 a.m. from two different entry points, resulting in clashes with the military which lasted for about two hours. The armed assailants then reached the humanitarian hub, where over 50 aid workers were present at the time of the attack.

Though the facility only sustained light damage, initial reports indicate it was directly targeted and an unexploded projectile was found at the gate. All UN and INGO vehicles in front of the humanitarian hub, which includes humanitarian offices and accommodation, were set ablaze. Protective security measures deployed at the hub prevented any harm to the staff inside.

"I am appalled by the continued violent attacks launched by non-state armed groups in civilian areas in Borno State. These incidents are the latest of too many clashes affecting civilians, humanitarian actors and the assistance we provide. Civilians and aid workers, their facilities and assets should never be a target and must be protected and respected at all times," stressed Mr Kallon.

These incidents raise growing concerns that aid workers and the life-saving assistance they provide are increasingly the direct targets of attacks by non-state armed groups. Such incidents impede the ability for aid workers to stay and deliver assistance in these remote areas, where millions of civilians urgently require assistance. The United Nations therefore continued to call on all parties to respect and protect civilians and humanitarian personnel in accordance with international humanitarian law.

The United Nations and NGO partners in Nigeria are working to bring urgent aid and curtail the spread of COVID-19 in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states where 10.6 million people are in need of assistance.

Borno Launches COVID-19 Heroes' Campaign

As part of the ongoing response to the COVID-19 outbreak in north-east Nigeria, Borno State, WHO in collaboration with partners, has launched a campaign tagged "COVID-19 Heroes Campaign", to recognize and designate survivors as heroes and heroines.

Launching the initiative on 29 May 2020 in Maiduguri, the Borno state Deputy Governor and Chairman of the State Task Force on COVID-19 Response, Alhaji Usman Umar Kadafur said that the campaign aims to demystify and de-stigmatize COVID-19 survivors by declaring them heroes and heroines of a disease that has claimed 25 lives in Borno. As at 28 May there are 257 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Borno and 8915 in Nigeria.

"In Borno state, where insurgency has caused enormous internal displacements for many people, loss of jobs and lives for others, it is only heroes and heroines that can survive a combination of these life-threatening conditions coupled with COVID-19 infection. This is the reason why the government recognizes the COVID-19 survivors as heroes and heroines", says Alhaji Kadafur.

The Deputy Governor, Alhaji Kadafur adds that, "You have become the beacon of truth that COVID-19 is real. You have become the symbol of hope that COVID-19 can be survived even as the preventive vaccine is underway. You have proved that our isolation centres are active and functional. You have defeated COVID-19. For that, I declare you "Heroes and Heroines".

Youth Power To Combat Mis- And Disinformation



Young people, a substantial part of the population all over the world, are a great potential in redefining the perception and landscape of communication with their power of influence. In this recognition, UNESCO Abuja Office organized a webinar on Youth Power in Combating Mis- and Disinformation during the COVID-19 Pandemic and beyond on Jun 30th, 2020 to discuss how the young people can use their exceptional creativity and innovation to develop feasible schemes for promoting a literate society.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the media landscape continues to witness uncertainty, worsen with the proliferation of the social media usage. The period has brought serious unprecedented and frustrating communication challenges, creating fear and insecurity around the continent. As stated by Mr. Mohamed O. Bangura, Minister of Youth Affairs of Sierra Leone, the current pandemic response in Africa should explore the power of the youth who are full of technological and innovative ideas that could disrupt traditional thinking and modes of addressing the pandemic and other health emergencies. According to him, “young people are the engine and creativity of African future.”

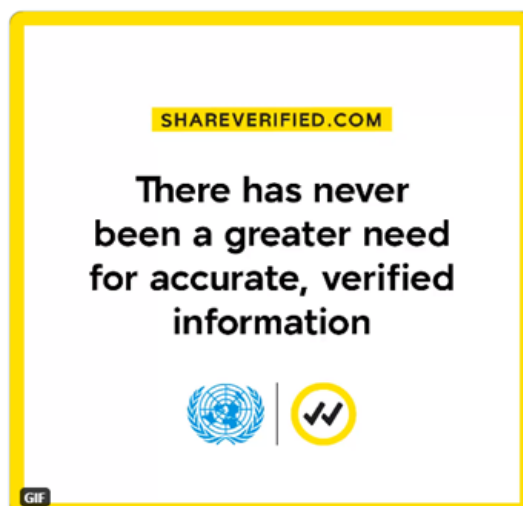
In the same vein, the survey report, Perception of COVID-19 Communication in West Africa (non-Sahel) conducted by UNESCO Abuja Office within the year, also found out that young people are one of the most active groups of population on different media platforms. They are not only recipients of information, but that their creativity can contribute immensely to the fight against mis- and disinformation.

In May 2020 under the Media and Information Literacy thematic, UNESCO Abuja Office launched the campaign of Call for Jingles. The campaign was designed to encourage young women and men to identify and leverage their creativity and innovation to combat mis- and disinformation on COVID-19. As part of the activities at the webinar, the top 15 winners of the call for jingles were announced, while the jingles of the top five positions were displayed to the audience. According to one of the winners, information is shifting the perception of COVID-19 itself, and only correcting the dis- and misinformation, creating reliable access to accurate information will develop a literate communication landscape for the public.

As introduced by Dr Carolyn Wilson, past Chair of Global Alliance for Partnerships on Media and Information (GAPMIL) from Canada, “Since 2011, UNESCO has launched an international, regional, and national interventions on Media and Information Literacy (MIL). “It recognizes the primary role of information and media in everyday lives and includes contents focusing on critically evaluating the information. “More substantially, during the COVID-19 pandemic, MIL is gradually becoming a useful tool for channeling accurate and reliable information to the vast population.”

Beatrice and Daniel, two youth ambassadors from GAPMIL (Brazil and Nigeria respectively), also discussed the relationship between youth bulge and establishment of a peaceful society and the establishment of youth alliance of media and information literacy. They further reiterated how the young people around the world could provide feasible and practical solutions in combating mis- and disinformation with their creativity and innovation.

To further expand the impact induced by the young people and as one of the key outcomes of the webinar, UNESCO Abuja Office is initiating a Youth Alliance of Media and Information Literacy to combat mis- and disinformation. So far, almost 100 young people have expressed interest in joining the Alliance. The inauguration of the Alliance is expected to take place in September 28, 2020.



UN Launches Gender Responsive Security Sector Reference Group – First of Its Kind



UN Women, with funding support from the Government of Germany, recently launched a novel project titled, Enhancing Gender-Responsive Security Operations and Community Dialogue on Gender-Responsive Security Sector Reform. An initiative which is the first of its kind in Nigeria, the project aims to fill in a critical gap around interagency gender collaboration, and to support efforts by the Government of Nigeria to enhance gender balance and gender responsiveness of security sector institutions in furtherance of its international, regional, and national commitments.

On 29 June 2020, as part of the project start-up activities, the country's first Security Sector Gender Reference Group was launched by the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and UN Women. In attendance at the inauguration were the Honourable Minister of Women Affairs, Dame Pauline K. Tallen; UN Women Representative to Nigeria and ECOWAS, Ms. Comfort Lamptey; Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Federal Republic of Nigeria and ECOWAS, Birgitt Ory; senior personnel from security sector agencies, civil society experts, and other stakeholders.

The project will also support key security sector institutions to integrate gender in their policies and operations; as well as improve community-security relations through enhanced collaboration between conflict-affected women and women's organisations with security sector institutions and personnel. This is extremely timely as in October of this year, the UN and international community will be commemorating 20 years since the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

Speaking at the launch, Ms. Birgitt Ory, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Federal Republic of Nigeria and ECOWAS stated that as a "current non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, Germany attaches vital importance on implementing UNSC-resolution 1325 worldwide and thus in Nigeria, the cooperation with key partners implementing Resolution 1325 is a priority for our political work at the German Embassy in Abuja."

Honourable Minister of Women Affairs, Dame Pauline K. Tallen noted that "there have been policy and practical measures put in place to increase the meaningful participation of women and enhance gender-responsiveness of security sector institutions. However, progress has been uneven and low across and within the various security institutions, and largely pursued in a piecemeal way rather than under a comprehensive framework." She stressed that "inclusive, responsive, and accountable security sector institutions and personnel, are particularly significant in the context of Nigeria where security personnel are engaged in multiple conflict fronts and operations alongside regular law and order functions, which cannot be overstated for the protection of women and girls."

The inauguration was also a prime opportunity to highlight the intersectionality between women's participation in peace and security processes, and violence against women and girls. Ms. Comfort Lamptey, UN Women Representative to Nigeria and ECOWAS stated that "the recent declaration of the State of Emergency on gender-based violence in Nigeria, against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, shines a spotlight on the high-levels of violence against women in Nigeria, including in conflict contexts, and the unique roles and responsibilities that the security sector has to play in protecting women and girls from violence". In this respect, she commended the strong leadership of the Ministry of Women's Affairs in leading on efforts to advance the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, including through its partnership with UN Women in launching this Reference Group.

The Reference Group, which will be comprised of representatives of core security agencies and affiliated institutions, oversight agencies, security sector focused CSOs, and independent security experts will be convened and chaired quarterly by the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, with the technical support of UN Women. Among other tasks, it will support enhanced civil-security relations; ensure implementation of gender policies where they exist; identify policy and programming gaps as they relate to gender responsive security sector; lead efforts towards the development and adoption of gender policies; and facilitate intra-agency mentoring, exchange, and lessons learning.

Fed. Ministry of Women Affairs, UN Kick Off COVID-19 Palliatives Distribution

The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs in collaboration with UN Women, flagged off the distribution of palliatives to vulnerable women and girls in 16 states across the six geopolitical zones, and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). The launch took place in Ushafa Village, Bwari Area Council of the FCT.

The joint activity follows the donation of \$100,000 by UN Women to the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs in May towards the procurement and distribution of palliative items to vulnerable Nigerian women and girls. The palliative distribution spearheaded by the Ministry of Women's Affairs and State Ministries of Women's Affairs, aims to provide at least 3,060 households across 16 States and the Federal Capital Territory with relief assistance to mitigate the immediate effects of COVID-19 and increase the dignity and wellbeing of women and girls.

The event was presided over by the Honourable Minister of Women Affairs, Dame Pauline K. Tallen; Minister of the Federal

Capital Territory (FCT) represented by the Secretary of Social Development, Chief Dilichukwu Onyedimma; Chief of Ushafa, Alhaji Mohammed Baba; Chairperson of the Bwari Area Council, Ushafa Traditional Council, Hon. Maryamu Barnabas Isa; and UN Women Representative to Nigeria and ECOWAS, Ms. Comfort Lamptey.

A notable element of this initiative is the emphasis on affirmative procurement as a way to bolster small and medium-sized, women-led enterprises which have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, all the palliatives being distributed to vulnerable women are being procured from women-owned businesses in each of the target states.

"We are confident that this model for affirmative procurement and women-led coordination will be a model for best practice to ensure women and girls are not left behind during crisis situations. Women's leadership is key to helping us get through this pandemic and key to helping us recover economically", Ms. Lamptey stated.



Captions, from left to right in a clockwise direction:

1. *Hon. Minister of Health, Dr. Osagie Ehanire (Left) engages UN Resident and Humanitarian-Coordinator Edward Kallon (right) at the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport Abuja, during the handing over of essential medical supplies procured by the UN to the Government of Nigeria. 20 June.*
2. *UN Resident and Humanitarian-Coordinator Edward Kallon (Left) receives in audience the Chair of Nigerians in Diaspora Commission, Hon Abike Dabiri-Erewa, at the UN House Abuja. 17 June.*
3. *UNDP Resident Representative in Nigeria, Mr Mohamed Yahya, held discussions with Vice President Prof Yemi Osinbajo on the social and economic impact of COVID-19 pandemic, and the role of multilateral collaboration. 19 June.*

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